

PIED A TERRE PARISIEN





In the living room, a collection of Hans Coper and Georges Jouve ceramics sit atop a fireplace framed by a pair of Georges Jouve “Os” sconces circa 1956. In the corner, an oak armchair by Bas Van Pelt (circa 1935) is placed between a stool by Charlotte Perriand and a 1947 Paavo Tynell lamp. The silhouette to the right is a 1945 bronze sculpture by Germaine Richier called ‘*L’Homme qui marche.*’

A Georges Jouve ceramic tile hangs in the hallway.



Photography by François Halard Words by Jack Stanley

Growing up in Paris, Nicolas Dreyfus always wanted to live on Place de Furstemberg, a tiny square tucked away on the Left Bank of the Seine. Finally, almost a decade ago, Dreyfus got the opportunity to view an apartment on the square. “*I made an offer the same day,*” he remembers. “*I fell in love.*”

Once he had the keys, Dreyfus enlisted his longtime collaborator Flora Byk to help redesign the apartment. The pair had known each other for years, with Byk frequently working on projects for Dreyfus during his time leading brands such as The Kooples and now Frame. “*It was a very old apartment, the structure wasn’t good, we had to rethink the old to make it how I wanted it,*” Dreyfus remembers.

A priority during the renovation was to maximize the light that flows into the space. Dreyfus’ apartment sits on the corner, with dual-aspect windows that run around the space. “*The light is something you cannot find in many different places in Paris,*” Dreyfus adds. “*When you wake up and open the windows, you get the feeling you are in a small village. It’s on the corner, so it’s full of light and emotion, and leaves and trees. You feel really like you’re in the middle of nowhere, rather than in Saint-Germain-des-Prés.*”

Byk describes the apartment’s location as “*discreet*,” highlighting the four trees that stand in the centre of the Place de Furstemberg. “There are 16 windows overlooking the street, which offer a true openness to the outside,” she says. “*The trees gently filter the natural light, and bring a poetic atmosphere to the interior.*”

Working on the project, Byk and Dreyfus developed a close personal relationship, sharing ideas, references and suggestions almost constantly. “*This project was marked by close collaboration and constant exchange*,” she says. “*Nicolas was very involved in every choice and detail.*” The starting point for the design of the apartment was Nicolas’ art collection. Rather than choosing pieces that fit the space, Dreyfus envisioned the space as a showcase for his beloved sculptures, ceramics and pictures.

“*I told Flora that it wasn’t a huge apartment, but I wanted something very special*,” Dreyfus says. “*I wanted to make something where I can put my objects. I thought about the apartment based on objects, ideas and art, sculptures, bronze, ceramics, furniture.*”

Talking about the apartment, there are a number of artists whom he cites as particular influences. The first moodboard he shared with Byk didn’t contain any direct interior or design references, instead it was filled with pictures and sculptures that Dreyfus loved. There was work by Cy Twombly, a painting by Giorgio Morandi and ceramics by Hans Coper. “*I’m obsessed with Hans Coper, the texture, the colour, the shapes*,” Dreyfus adds. “*It was more about objects, art, paintings than it was about interiors*,” Dreyfus says of the moodboard. Luckily, he was working with the perfect collaborator. “*I’ve known Flora for many years and she understands my taste.*”



Right: In the bathroom a custom mirror cabinet designed by Flora Byk sits above taps by Lefroy Brooks and a set of three glass bottles by Guerlain. Stool by Charlotte Perriand.

Left: A Baccarat bonbonnière circa 1890 sits on a ceramic table by André Borderie.

A pair of Carlo Mollino prints frame the bedroom.





Dreyfus’ art collection began decades ago, and his interest in art can be traced back even further. “*I grew up going to museums with my mother,*” he says. “*Now, my life is fully dedicated to art.*” While his early interest began in museums and galleries with his family, it was living away from home that accelerated his interest in art. “*When I was 22, I was living in New York and I was working for Hermès,*” Dreyfus says. “*Every Friday I would go to MoMA because it was free. I went every Friday for two years, and I started to learn about expressionism, about abstract art. I became obsessed with it.*”

Around the same time, Dreyfus bought his first piece, a small ceramic by Georges Jouve. “*I was driving in Paris, down rue de Lille, and I saw a beautiful ceramic in a gallery. It was very soft and beautiful in texture. It was six hundred euros, which I thought was very expensive for a small object. I took the ceramic and paid it off with one check every six months.*” Now, decades later, he thinks he is one of the biggest Jouve collectors in the world, with more than 150 of his ceramics. “*I’m very consistent,*” he adds. Even years later, Dreyfus’ obsession has shown no signs of slowing. “*I buy art almost every day,*” he says. “*I’m addicted.*”

The apartment on Place de Furstemberg is a way for Dreyfus to be surrounded by these objects, to allow them to shine. Although not his primary residence (he spends most of his time in Los Angeles), the Parisian pied-à-terre is an important base for Dreyfus. “*Nicolas had specific pieces in mind from the very beginning of the project, such as his Hans Coper vases, a sculpture by Germaine Richier, and a coffee table by André Borderie which he wanted to bring into focus,*” Byk says. “*The architecture therefore had to be in perfect harmony with these art pieces, in complete symbiosis with their presence.*”

Byk describes the aesthetic of the apartment as “*épurée*,” a word which has no real translation into English. “*Where every element finds its place with precision, nothing superfluous*,” she explains. “*The idea was to create a subtly sophisticated atmosphere, where materials speak for themselves and allow the artworks to breathe*.” For Dreyfus, the design of the apartment allows him to experience his prized collection as perfectly as possible. “*I love to wake up in the morning and see my objects*,” he says. “*I like to see a piece of art and get the emotion right away. When I see ceramics or a piece of furniture, I have a connection with it.*”

Throughout his art collection and his Place de Furstemberg apartment, Dreyfus maintains a contrast between different sides of himself. “*Do I like purity and radicality, or do I like some softness?*” Dreyfus asks. “*It’s all a contrast between softness and radicality.*” Discussing his collection of artworks, Dreyfus highlights different artists who speak to different sides of this contrast. “*You have the radicality of Jean Prouvé architecture, of Wright Morris, you have the power of a Germaine Richier sculpture, you have the purity of Gerrit Rietveld and the emotion of a Twombly, the softness of Hans Coper*,” he says. “*I’m always in between, do I like pure minimalism or do I like some softness?*”



Germaine Richier’s “L’Homme Qui Marche” circa 1945



A Serge Mouille “Cocotte” lamp sits atop a walnut desk by George Nakashima. Lizard notebook by Hermès, wooden cup by Odile Noll and ceramic bowl by Denise Gatard.

A Serge Mouille lamp (circa 1958) and Jacques and Dani Ruelland ceramics sit atop a Charlotte Perriand “N°407B *Forme Libre*” desk paired with a Jean Prouvé “*Metropole N°305*” chair by a window overlooking the Place de Furstemberg. On the wall hangs a Nan Goldin print (“*Skinheads Having Sex*” 1978) and a Georges Jouve mirror circa 1955.



A Georges Jouve “*Toupie*” sconce circa 1956.

In the apartment, this same contrast can be seen throughout. One example comes from the apartment’s wooden flooring, which was sourced from an old château and restored by Joris Van Apers. “*The colour of the rug is very soft, but the wooden floor is very raw, it’s very powerful*” Dreyfus says.

As well as representing the contrast of the apartment, the push and pull between radicality and softness, the flooring is also an example of Dreyfus’ meticulous approach to the design. “*He pays attention to everything, from the selection of materials to the smallest details,*” Byk says of Dreyfus. “*Notably, he selected an 18th century parquet floor restored by Joris Van Apers. He even travelled personally to Belgium, to Joris’s workshop, to oversee the restoration process. This parquet, originally from an old château, is steeped in history and was restored with exceptional care, giving it a unique soul and presence within the apartment.*”

For Dreyfus, the apartment is both an oasis and a gallery. On one hand, it is a quiet place of solitude, a pied-à-terre that feels like it opens out onto a bucolic village square. On the other hand, it is a space for his art to be displayed, objects and items he has collected and cherished over a lifetime. With both influences, it is a reflection of Dreyfus himself, located on the very square where he always dreamed of living. Or, as he describes it more simply, the apartment is “*a peaceful place where I can observe my objects and live with them.*”