

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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**TOMMY
HILFIGER**
LORD OF
THE MANOR

**STAR
POWER**

FRANCA SOZZANI REMEMBERING HER PASSION FOR DESIGN
PIERRE YOVANOVITCH FRANCE'S TOP TASTEMAKER
JOHN PAWSON'S MANHATTAN MASTERWORK
MIKE D A BEASTIE BOY'S MALIBU BEACH HOUSE

AD catches up with the internationally in-demand designer *Pierre Yovanovitch* at his brand-new Paris atelier

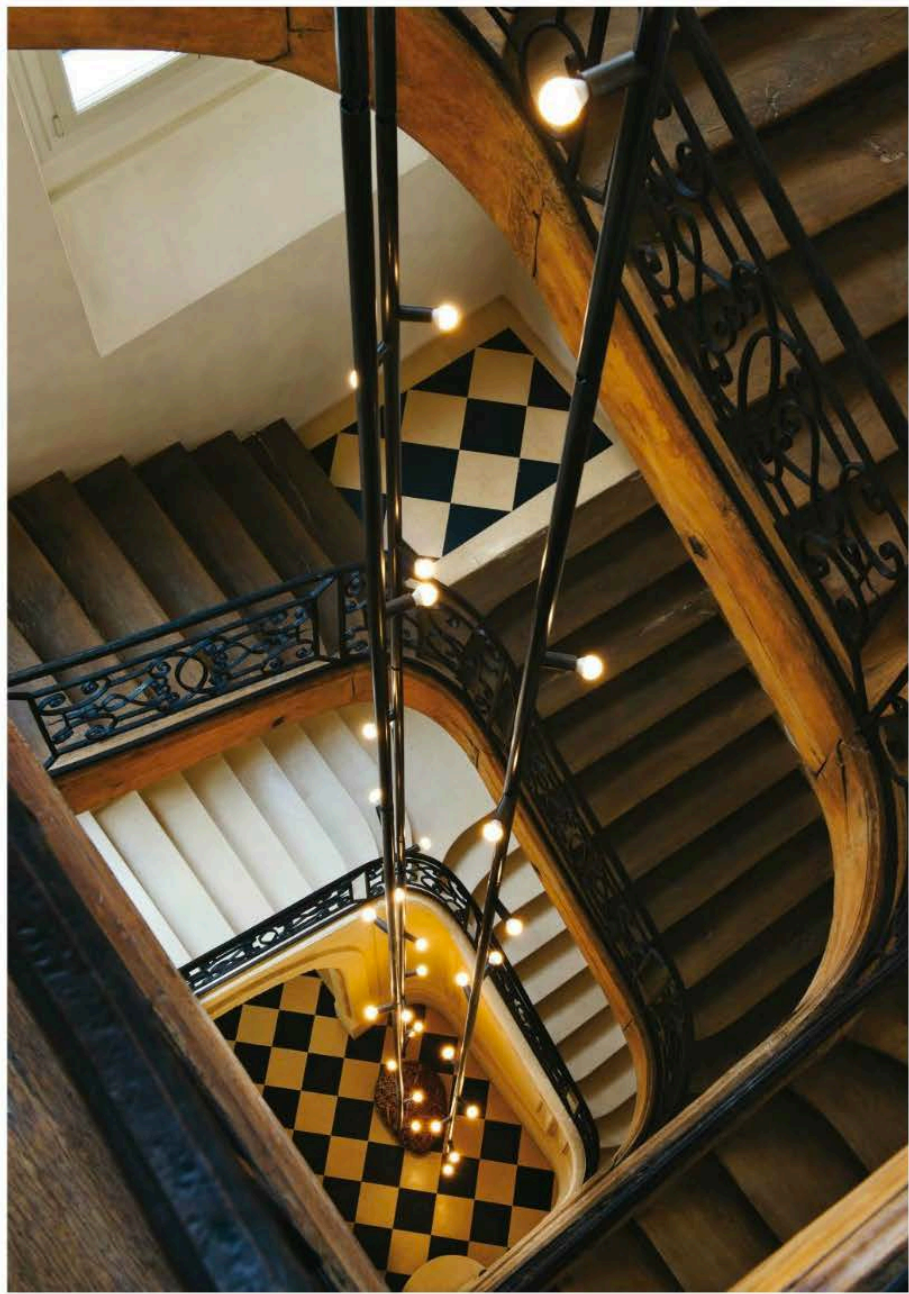


MAN OF THE WORLD

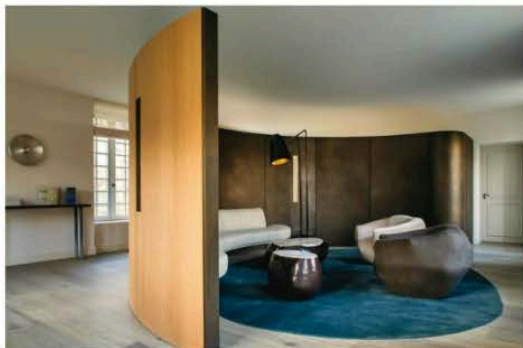
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PHOTOGRAPHY BY **AMBROISE TÉZENAS**

RIGHT A SITTING AREA IN PIERRE YOVANOVITCH'S OFFICE FEATURES A FLOATING SOFA AND CERAMIC TABLE OF HIS DESIGN, CHAIR BY AXEL EINAR HJORTH; PENDANT LIGHT BY JOSEPH-ANDRÉ MOTTE; FLOOR LAMP BY JOSEF FRANK. **ABOVE** A 1970S CHAIR BY ROBERTO MATTA WELCOMES VISITORS TO A SWISS CHALET DECORATED BY YOVANOVITCH. FOR DETAILS SEE SOURCES.





ABOVE YOVANOVITCH DESIGNED A 45-FOOT-LONG LIGHT FIXTURE, COMPOSED OF THREE BLACK METAL RODS, FOR THE MAIN STAIRCASE OF HIS PARIS OFFICE.



ABOVE YOVANOVITCH DEvised THE PARIS OFFICES OF KERING, WHICH OWNS GUCCI, SAINT LAURENT, BALENCIAGA, AND OTHER LUXURY BRANDS. **LEFT** THE DESIGNER IN HIS PAPA OURS CHAIR, FLOOR LAMP BY HANS BERGSTRÖM. **BELOW** THE DINING ROOM AT YOVANOVITCH'S OFFICE; THE TABLE, CHAIRS, AND CEILING LIGHT ARE HIS CREATIONS.



The elements that make a Yovanovitch space—the polished restraint, the coy dramatic gestures, the artisanal richness, the masterful manipulation of volume—are all on ample display in his new offices, or they will be when he's done. For example, he designed the 45-foot-long light fixture that hangs in the central staircase. It's just three black rods with bulbs protruding along its length, but it somehow makes the four-story staircase seem twice as tall.

The result appears effortless, but getting here, Yovanovitch says, was a nightmare. When the designer came across the building a year ago, it was a run-down mess. "Rotten, rotten, rotten—just this side of unhealthy," he recalls. But, struck by the opportunity it would give him to present his vision to clients, he signed a lease and undertook the herculean task of restoration.

We're interrupted by Emmanuel Barrois, who made the office's massive

black-glass entrance doors. Barrois is now crafting windows for a top-secret venture on the Left Bank. "The more time I spend managing, the less time I get to work with artisans, which is really what I like to do best," Yovanovitch says grumpily.

But Morisset sees the payoff, even if Yovanovitch sometimes loses sight of it. "Pierre has managed to make himself one of the top five European designers," he says. "Sure, he's stressed, but I told him, 'Look, you've got projects everywhere in the world. If Jean Royère can do it, so can you.'" ▲

"This is the spirit of French design," says Yovanovitch. "Very chic but restrained, minimal but still warm."

Y

ierre Yovanovitch apologizes as he hurries into the small sitting room where I've been asked to wait. The interior designer recently moved his firm into this grand 18th-century *hôtel particulier* in Paris's Sentier neighborhood, and the floors are still cluttered with cardboard and bubble wrap, not to mention a Georg Baselitz painting or two waiting to be hung.

Meanwhile, Yovanovitch is looking to open offices in the U.S., where an increasing number of

his residential clients live. ("Americans give you a kind of fuel the French don't," he notes. "They say, 'Whoa, my house is going to be the best house in the world'—even if it's not true.") The future New York offices will also serve as a showroom for his own furniture, like the plump Ours chair. (Once I catch the name, French for "bear," I make out two fuzzy ears on the model sitting in the next room.) Yovanovitch plans to launch his collection in September to coincide with a design exhibition he is curating at New York's R & Co. gallery.

Yovanovitch is a suave guy, but right now even he appears slightly frazzled by all the projects he's juggling. "I'm very ambitious," the talent says. That's putting it mildly when you've modeled your career on that of Jean Royère, the great mid-century French designer who opened branches in the Middle East and Latin America before spending his final years in the U.S. "I'm working like a donkey," he says. "This is not a serene life."

You wouldn't know it by the surroundings. Yovanovitch's understated aesthetic makes the room feel calm: Slabs of soothing, almond-color travertine—a material he loves—cover the lower part of the walls; oak chairs by Axel Einar Hjorth, a little-known Swedish designer from the 1930s, lend a rustic note. Yovanovitch reveres him as a kind of Viking precursor to Donald Judd in the purity of his lines. The gestures here are not showy but very refined and precise, which is a Yovanovitch hallmark. (He's always been a detail freak. Before turning to interiors, Yovanovitch oversaw Pierre Cardin's licensing business in Belgium, and he just couldn't stop himself from tweaking the look of the belts and ties: "They were ugly, ugly, ugly!" Eventually, he moved to Paris and was given charge of Cardin's menswear collections.)

"I didn't want anything over the top. This is the spirit of French design," he says. "Very chic but restrained, minimal in its way but still warm."

Yovanovitch is particularly good at shaping space. "He's got an amazing sense of volume," says Cédric Morisset of Carpenters Workshop Gallery, which collaborates frequently with Yovanovitch. Morisset remembers one cramped Paris apartment with oppressively low ceilings. After Yovanovitch's



ABOVE A PORTRAIT BY STEPHAN BALKENHOL OVERLOOKS A SET OF BLUE-LACQUERED DANISH FURNITURE IN A PROVENCE DINING ROOM BY YOVANOVITCH. BRASS CEILING LIGHT BY PAAVO TYNELL. **LEFT** THE DESIGNER'S BEBE OURS ("BABY BEAR") CHAIR IN A CASAMANCE FABRIC.

intervention, the whole place felt airier and grander, almost as if he had altered its dimensions. "He couldn't have raised the ceilings," Morisset says, "but I can't figure out how he did it."

Perhaps this mastery of space is also what makes Yovanovitch so deft at displaying the contemporary art that he and many of his clients collect. He has designed galleries for Kamel Mennour in Paris and London as well as exhibition spaces at the Patinoire Royale contemporary art museum in Brussels. Lately he's gone further, commissioning artists to create work on-site for several residential projects. Through Kamel Mennour, he got Japanese artist Tadashi Kawamata to fashion a giant wood bird's nest for the bedroom of a house in Paris. "Hallucinant!" says a delighted Yovanovitch. (He now has collaborations under way with Ugo Rondinone, Daniel Buren, and James Turrell.)