

interiors

MAGAZINE





DREAMING MARAIS

DESIGNER: FABRICE AUSSET
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FOR FABRICE AUSSET THERE IS LITTLE SEPARATION BETWEEN designing and dreaming. The French tastemaker immersed himself in bold and unconventional territory while renovating a stately seventeenth-century town house for a collector in Paris's Marais district. The project was ambitious but enchanted, with Ausset creating "fun environments, sparkling worlds, surprising spaces, subtle mixes, new forms, original and refreshing visions." It was, as he described, "the creation of a magical world."

As the leader of Zoevox, the renowned Paris architecture and design firm founded in 1987, Ausset acts as architect, designer, contractor and set designer for a wide range of international projects, including hotels, offices, restaurants, residences and a wildly exuberant bank concept for BNP Paribas in Paris.

Hôtel Bacchus, with its pediment adorned with grapes, is a beautiful historic residence with an intriguing past—according to its current owner it was probably once the workshop of an alchemist. This distant resident installed a huge blond stone fireplace, in the style of François I, decorated with salamanders and acanthus leaves, the focal point and pride of the main sitting room. The 4,300-square-foot home has three main levels, each with its own personality. The first floor consists of the entrance area, a small living room and the dining room; a lower floor has a main living room and a projection room; the top floor contains an office and the master bedroom. "The space had been transformed many times over the centuries," says Ausset, "and it needed a lot of attention. We had to go back to the structural elements of the building." Stone walls and floors were cleaned, wood paneling restored or recreated, iron railings repaired—every detail was renovated.



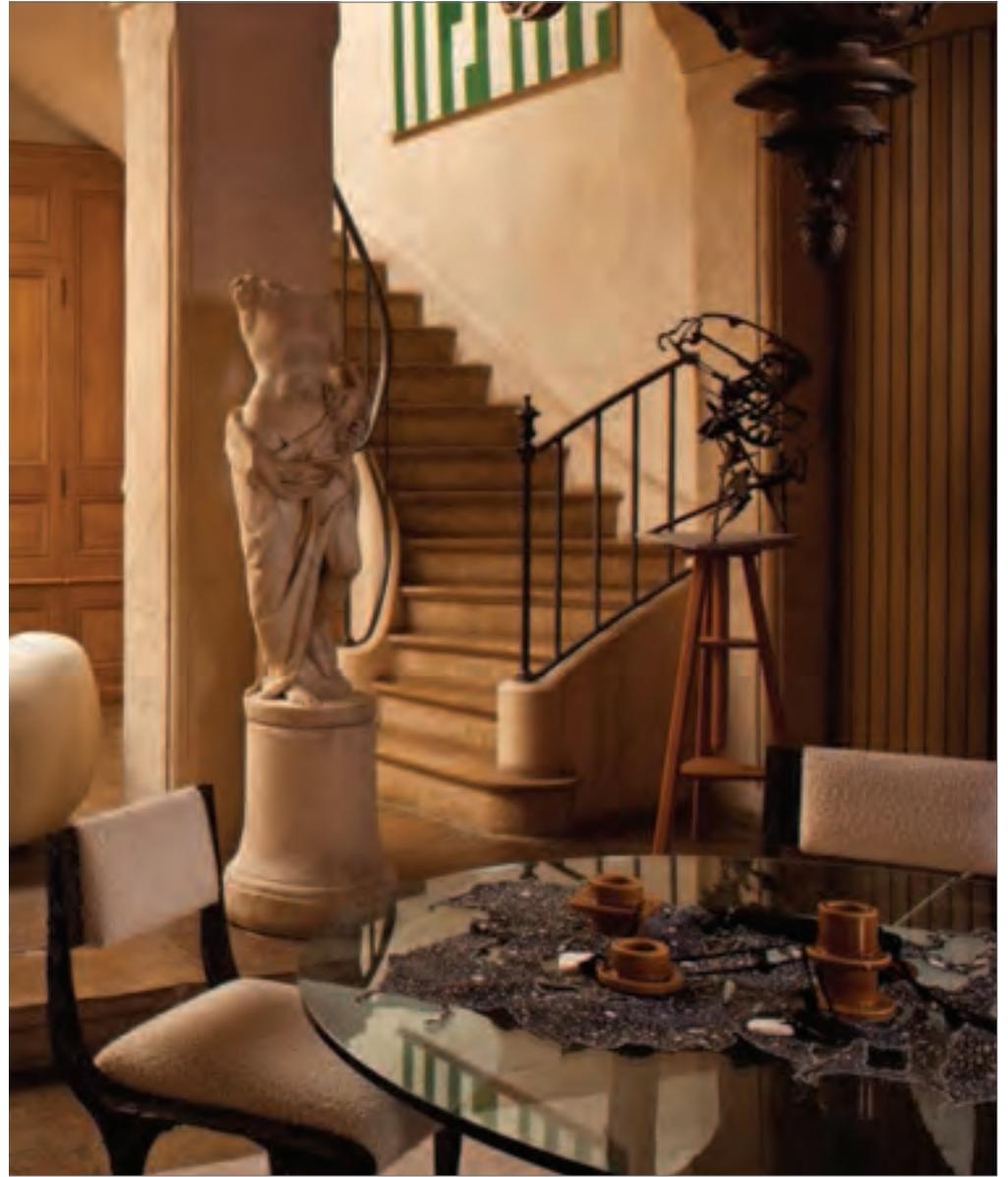
A CONNOISSEUR OF CONTEMPORARY ART, AUSSET defines himself as a "non-eccentric avant-garde." His signature is mixing contemporary art with design creations while respecting the spirit of the space. Working with Rozen Le Nagard, a specialist in twentieth-century decorative arts, and Sophie Gonzales, a specialist in contemporary art, he replaced the sober elegance of the eighteenth-century French furniture that had long dominated with the clean and minimalist lines of pieces from the 1950s through the 1970s, and a wide range of contemporary art and objets. Elements were selected based on two criteria. First, he wanted pieces of the highest quality that were also cheerful, fun and pleasant to live with. "That doesn't have to take away from comfort," he notes, "and it provides

an endless source of pleasure." The designer insisted on a convivial, light, laid-back tone for the majestic setting. Second, he wanted an eclectic mix of periods and styles, which he considers a golden rule of design.

What emerges is a succession of moods. On the first floor, classic and elegant shapes take command, while retaining their modernity. In the entrance area, Ausset designed oak paneling that sets off a 2011 papier-mache mirror by the Farfelus Farfadets and a 1978 console table by Angelo Mangiarotti. Between two windows he installed Christian Boltanski's 1987 *Monument*, and placed Gerard Rancinan's photograph *Portrait de Cardinal* on another wall. There are also midcentury ceramics by Georges Jouve and Paul Chambost.



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