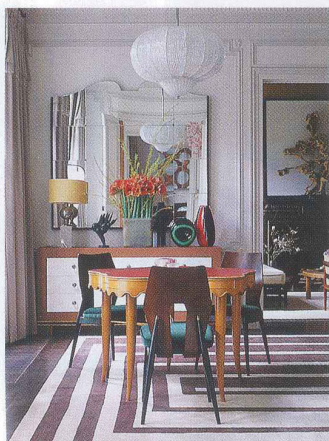


PARISIAN
PIZZAZZ

The designers of this weekend retreat in central Paris created a fun, 'playful' look, reflecting the owners' taste for bold colours and mid-twentieth-century design



The sitting room houses a collection of colourful modern pieces, such as the Fifties wing chairs, the red leather card table, and a graphic striped rug by The Rug Company. An archway leads into the library beyond



For London-based interior designer Andrzej Zarzycki, this house in Paris is 'a little gem'. It is certainly a well-hidden treasure. Located at the heart of the 6th arrondissement, it sits behind a quintessentially Haussmannian building and is so perfectly concealed from the street that a passer-by would have no idea of its existence. The area has traditionally been home to convents and religious institutions, and the house has views not only of a chapel, but also of a vast expanse of private gardens, the size of which you'd be hard-pressed to find elsewhere in central Paris. 'On a Sunday morning, you can hear the bells ringing and the birds singing,' Andrzej enthuses.

The house itself is equally idyllic. Dating from 1860, it boasts a mellow brick façade. Its owners are a British property developer and his American wife, for whom Andrzej and his partner, Anthony Collett, had already worked on a home in London. Before Anthony and Andrzej got started here, the structure needed a certain amount of revision. For this, they commissioned a Parisian architect named Laurent Bourgois, who had worked in a similar capacity for decorators such as Jacques Grange and Tino Zervudachi, as well as overseeing projects of his own in Switzerland, Houston and Maine.

Laurent's approach was essentially to respect the history of the house. Outside, he mended the roof and replaced the tiny windowpanes with larger, less fussy ones. On the inside, the layout remained more or less the same. He simply knocked two rooms into one to create the spacious dining room and renovated the basement to accommodate a utility room, a spare bedroom and a handsome wine cellar. The first floor is home to the main and spare bedrooms, and above that is a studio for the owners' daughter. Throughout, Laurent carried out a certain amount of cosmetic surgery. He removed a spiral staircase that occupied one corner of the library, simplified the over-elaborate mouldings and panelling in the sitting room, and blocked up a door leading into the kitchen. Then, he adopted a distinctly modern style for the bathrooms and installed a skylight in the kitchen. 'Before, it was extremely gloomy,' he comments.



In the interiors, Anthony and Andrzej had the chance to express themselves with a certain amount of pizzazz. 'It's a weekend house,' notes Andrzej. 'The owners are not going to be there day in, day out, so the design could be playful.' It could also be bright and bold. 'A lot of our clients like the cream and beige look, which can be nice,' he continues, 'but the owners here love colour, so that was our focus with this commission.' Pink and yellow armchairs were placed in the sitting room, and a brilliant blue rug put down in the dining room. Bought in London, it fortuitously turned out to be exactly the right size.

The rest of the furnishings closely reflect the owners' taste for design from the Fifties and Sixties – the decoration throughout has that strong graphic quality which so typified the period. In the study, a black curtain with a bold pattern of white rings screens shelves originally intended for books, but now used to house the clients' shoes. The wall behind the bed in the top-floor studio, meanwhile, is covered in a geometric fabric from Christopher Farr. Elsewhere are a number of interesting finds. One of Andrzej's favourites is the large, asymmetrical, French, Forties wardrobe in the spare room, which itself folds flat for storage. 'It's like a piece of modern, flat-pack furniture,' he notes. On top of it is a collection of bizarre alabaster lamps and wooden sculptures – 'like mushrooms or caveman lights'.

At first glance, you would be forgiven for thinking the house is full of pieces by well-known designers. There are a few. The sectional 'Eye' coffee table in the library is by Pierre Chapo, a close collaborator of Charlotte Perriand; there is also a red lacquer screen from American designer Paul Evans's 'Cityscape' series. But most of the pieces are anonymous. 'There was not a big budget at all,' explains Andrzej, 'but it was a carefully considered one.' The wall 'sculpture' in the dining room consists of 'very cheap' light fittings. 'We thought it looked like a Pierre Cardin shop,' he asserts. A handful of other pieces came with a rather higher price tag. A prime example is the spectacular Venini chandelier above the dining table. Dating from the mid Sixties, it was originally commissioned for the headquarters of the



OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT A door opens from the hall into the sitting room. A painting by Bill Allen hangs above a chaise longue custom-designed by Collett-Zarzycki. Architect Laurent Bourgois simplified the formerly elaborate panelling and mouldings, to suit the modern decoration. The Swedish pendant light dates from the Forties. THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT In the library, the 'Eye' coffee table is by Pierre Chapo. The lacquer screen in the corner is from Paul Evans's 'Cityscape' series. In the top-floor bedroom, the back wall is covered in a fabric by Christopher Farr. The house dates from the late nineteenth century



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French sugar company, Béghin-Say. Given that each piece of glass weighs around 500g, the ceiling joists had to be reinforced before it could be hung.

The designers' mandate did not stop inside. They were also asked to revamp the house's private garden – something of a luxury in Paris, but one that comes with a major drawback: you are almost inevitably overlooked by neighbours. As Laurent explains, 'The clients didn't really want a garden where they would hang out; they wanted something they could contemplate.' The design devised by Collett-Zarzycki is formal, with clipped hedges and a gazebo, which can be used for barbecues or to escape from inquisitive eyes. In winter, evergreen plants keep the garden verdant, while in summer, the space blooms with blue and white flowers. For Andrzej, the result makes for something of an urban oasis. 'It's extraordinary,' he declares. 'When you enter, it's almost as if you were in a cloister.' The owners put it even more succinctly. 'It is,' they say simply, 'a unique hideaway' □

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The furnishings closely reflect the owners' taste for design from the Fifties and Sixties

BOTH PAGES CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT In the dining room, the Sixties Venini chandelier contrasts with the wall 'sculpture', which was made from 'very cheap' light fittings; the rosewood cabinet was designed by Ico Parisi, and the electric-blue rug was made by the French company Tisca. A door leads to the dining room from the staircase hall. In the study, a curtain in a black-and-white fabric from JAB Anstoetz's Trinidad range screens shelving. A door opens from the study into the main bedroom; Collett-Zarzycki designed the footstool to match the Fifties chair. A series of maquettes by Léon-Georges Baudry hangs above the bed



