

CREATE

AT HOME WITH OLD & NEW

ALI HEATH



CITY BOLTHOLE

There are many things I love about Paris: the architecture, antique markets, galleries and energy; the historic shop of my favourite ceramicist, Astier de Villatte, on the rue Saint Honoré; the lifestyle store Merci and its enchanting library; the inner courtyard at Hôtel Costes; and precious memories of my children sailing vintage pond yachts in the Jardin des Tuileries. However, one of my favourite discoveries is the wonderful work of the Parisian-based interior designer Marianne Evennou, who for me is one of the most talented interior designers of our time.

As an interior designer, Marianne's style is always compelling and visionary. She finds joy not in the size of a project, but in the atmosphere of the space and how it feels and flows, the provenance of the visual story, and the way colour, light and materials interact. Her signature style is instantly recognizable, yet each project is highly unique. She remains amazingly humble, concerned only with imagining, dreaming and listening carefully to her clients, and producing intricate plans that inspire. She has no interest in worrying about external opinions or trends.

'I like to keep the integrity of a place – in Paris, it is quite often the mouldings, chimneys, wooden floors and tiles that carry a timeless story,' explains Marianne. Globalized interior decoration does not appeal; instead she looks into the soul of a building and her client's mind to 'create a personal, imaginary museum – a second skin that protects and helps you face the outside

world. It has nothing to do with social image, but is more a quest to discover who we really are'.

Marianne grew up in both France and Holland; and her somewhat nomadic existence instilled a love of home and a desire for roots. She met her husband Franck, a celebrated sculptor, furniture designer and artist, when she was 18. Forty five years later, they now live in a former 1950s factory, 45 minutes from Paris, having moved from a nearby 17th-century monastery. Marianne's career has evolved creatively, moving from economic researcher to founder of a limited-edition artisanal rug company and marketing her husband's work. Then, at 50, she changed direction and took up interior design. 'I had already renovated several homes for myself and my family, but when our boys left home to study, I needed to be busy, and friends asked me to help them too.' These homes, applauded by the press, raised Marianne's profile, and her self-effacing passion has become a quiet force within the design world.

Regarded as an exceptional 'colourist' – and a master of reimagining smaller spaces – Marianne has built a reputation for breathing new life into thoughtlessly carved-out smaller apartments, set within prominent architectural addresses, changing these spaces from drab bedsits to 'poetic urban huts'.

HARD WORKING Bespoke hallway storage keeps spaces clutter free, while rich blue walls add impact as you enter this city retreat.





This coincides with the decorative pendulum swinging away from the stress of owning and maintaining larger properties to enjoying elegant, more bijoux spaces that ‘feel lighter, both financially and materially’.

In this city project, a 35-sq.-m (377-sq.-ft), fourth-floor apartment located in the chic 2nd arrondissement of Paris, next to the famous Place Vendôme, Marianne has transformed dark and open plan into compartmentalized and bright, with the living spaces cleverly zoned for cooking, relaxing, sleeping and showering. A dark-hued entrance hall transitions into the lighter interior, painted in fresh shades of cornflower, pale blue, soft pink and off-whites, with Marianne’s trademark bands of colour adding depth and refinement to the sitting room walls. ‘I wanted to heighten the circulation of light by creating indoor vistas that allow the eye to travel freely,’ she explains. There’s an oversized mirror in the kitchen and a new separate bedroom, framed by elegant, atelier-style windows that can link the room to, or cocoon it from, the main living area.

Marianne is an expert at creating contrast within a space. For example, she cleverly uses different flooring, textures and colours to distinguish and connect areas with their own identity. Storage is cleverly hidden, ensuring open shelves and tables are the domain only of the useful and beautiful.

‘Even though I enjoy looking at a refined Le Corbusier home, I personally like to mix styles, materials and eras – the “total look” is not for me.’

KITCHEN ON REFLECTION A statement Chinese vintage mirror increases the sense of space within the open-plan layout.

Throughout, sustainable materials ensure a timeless feel: herringbone parquet in the living room and bedroom, chic marble in the bathroom, and Pierre Bleue slate floors by Ermes Aurelia and Granit du Zimbabwe worktops in the kitchen. As Marianne explains: ‘I like to balance natural raw materials with unpretentious refinement; and simplicity with more decorative artisanal finds.’ Think patterned wedding boxes from Antoinette Poisson, Lucia Mondadori vases, Atelier Vime lighting and candle vases, alongside layered textiles from Caravane, Pierre Frey, Textiles Français and Tensira. Art is always important: a favourite portrait from the gallery Maison Massol and an ink triptych above the sofa by Franck Evennou, inspired by a Puvis de Chavannes painting.

Lighting is considered functionally, decoratively and for its ability to create mood and ambience. ‘I am drawn creatively to industrial lights from Wo & Wé and Zangra, wicker lamps and cones from Atelier Vime, and more modernist Biny Spot wall lamps from DCW Editions. I also love to draw my own lampshade designs. Atmosphere is for me much more important than furniture – it creates a sense of wellbeing, which is something you cannot buy. Simple everyday things like books, music, a scented candle, a drawing of your child, a photo that reminds you of a happy moment, a dog on your knees or a textural plaid are like breathing creative magic into your home.’

Indeed, with Marianne’s unique ability to connect with buildings and people, in her work she successfully conjures an original sense of place and personality, combining old architectural bones with the new and handmade – so creating that elusively unique atmosphere which, like her, is a rare and joyous find.



DRESSED TO IMPRESS Modern lights from Merci, vases from Lucia Mondadori and a painting by Frédéric Amblard add beauty and aesthetic appeal to the bespoke kitchen. The blue palette delineates the space from the living area.



BESPOKE DETAILS A custom-made sofa covered with a pink Pierre Frey fabric sits below a triptych of bespoke artworks by Franck Evennou.





DEPTH & DIVISION In the small bathroom area to the right of the bed, Marianne balances perspective with discretion. Soft pink paintwork and fabrics heighten the feminine charm.



PRIVATE SCREENING The bedroom can be separated with curtains from the main living area or left open to optimize light. Modern textiles from Caravane reflect the palette of the vintage portrait from Maison Massol above the bed.

