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How the World's Richest Man Built
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SHANGHAI SHANGRI-LA:
Factory turns Artist's Paradise in the Paris of the East



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A CUTE ANGLE

Left: in the main living area, Mathias Kries's '1900' sofa, a prototype in birch created for the living room, sits beneath a 1950s 'Spider' sconce by Serge Mouille. A 'Star's' Four ceramic pot by Mathias and Jovine, also 1950s, sits on a travertine and oak sideboard by Prouvé (1949). Beside an oak stool by Prouvé – all from Galerie Teyssie. Above: creates in organic paper inspired Kries's 'Fossil' mirror sculpture on the wall above one of a pair of Prouvé 'Vaisseau' lounge chairs (1949). It sits on a 'Mogul' rug Kries designed as a deconstruction of herringbone parquet.

Few movers on the contemporary scene can claim to have studied decorative techniques with a fraternity dating back to the Middle Ages. Step forward glider, sculptor and skyscraper specialist Mathias Kries. But in this Paris flat, owned by a lover of postwar furniture, he has taken his time-honoured skills in an original and altogether spiky direction, as Danielle Miller reports. Photography: Richard Powers



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The view towards the entrance and the kitchen, which Kries painted in muted grey shades so that it fuses into the background. The ceiling lamp above the Prouvé table and chairs was especially attached in white for the space by Drake.

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IN THE HANDS OF Mathias Kiss, a traditionally trained Parisian painter/sculptor with a penchant for trompe l'oeil, art and design are blended in radical ways to create extraordinary ethereal environments. Kiss, whose name is as common as Smith in his father's native Hungary, drew early inspiration from his parents, one an inventor and the other a furniture restorer. At just 14 years old, he joined up with the historic Compagnons, a close-knit fraternity of artisans dating back to the Middle Ages. There he began a decorative-painting apprenticeship under the tutelage of master craftsmen, helping to restore the gilding in the Louvre, the Opéra Garnier and the Comédie Française, and refining his brushstroke in heavenly cloud formations on the ceilings of the hotels Ritz, Maurice and George V.

After 13 years of what he calls his "magical fantasy world", however, he reached a point when "the silver lining faded". The reason? He could not convince his mentors to modernise these ancient skills with his ideas. "My time was up, and now I have the freedom to use these techniques as I would the colours on a palette." That freedom translated into Attilaou, the multidisciplinary design studio the enigmatic Kiss set up in 2002 with his friend and fellow artisan Olivier Piel. Ever since, he has been quietly making a name for himself through various platforms and media. In addition to one-off commissions for clients, he has completed luminous skyscapes chez Catherine Deneuve and various other private decorating projects. There are fabric designs for Kenzo's 2012 autumn/winter collection, and a boutique, with the feel of a stage set, for Marie-Hélène de Taillac in New York.

Earlier this year, Kiss opened his first solo exhibition, *Sens 90*, at Galerie Arnel Soyer (which in turn had its première at this summer's Design Miami/Basel). The focus was on three limited-edition sculptural works that were originally created for the artist's latest offering: the very individual (retro) he reinvented for a single professional and his two children in the heart of Paris.

In a converted 1850s limestone building that once housed a meat market, this first floor flat, with its simple white volumes, sits in the shadows of a Gothic cathedral – so close that its 13th-century

walls, pierced with jewel-like windows, form a perimeter around the private leafy terrace onto which the space opens. It's an oasis removed from the fast-paced life just beyond the front door.

In the building, which was developed in the 1970s, the flat occupies one of the three floors, yet in a rather unusual way: the windows on the facade don't match up at all with the levels of the interior floors, which were inserted into the cavernous void of the old market hall. This makes the building seem more like a warehouse than a residence, something that perhaps benefits the secretive nature of the owner, who previously rented the flat until five years ago, when he had the opportunity to buy.

At that point, the décor was the worse for wear, suffering 'major identity issues', says Kiss. The client, however, made do (as one does), focusing instead on his growing collection of mid-20th-century industrial-style furniture. The two men first met over an installation Kiss had assembled using Charlotte Perriand-designed wall lamps (now in the bedroom), and clearly saw eye to eye. This encounter prompted the commission of an entirely new re-design that has been five years in the making.

The first thing you notice when you walk into the entrance hall is the walls, which, like a canvas, are painted in geometrical blocks of faux marble and deepest green that stretch up onto the ceiling. For the floor, meanwhile, Kiss laid narrow strips of oak and painted them white. "As a visual buffer zone, I wanted to give it a sense of place and offer an homage to the past," he explains. Beyond lies the living room, an elongated white space softened with an area rug and furnished for the most part with the simple, honest forms of Jean Prouvé designs and Serge Mouille lamps; these mix seamlessly with the sofa, rugs and artworks – all edgy sculptural works in themselves – custom-designed by Kiss.

The last thing the designer wanted was a "polished-concrete shrine, or worse, a showroom". Instead, he sought a mood that would lend itself primarily to the owner's passion for yoga. "I wanted this need for absence to create a presence," says Kiss, who has united the space using very little, leaving walls almost bare. But look closely, and the geometric forms continue ever so subtly from the entrance, lacquered white on white, and envelop the space, on the ceiling above the table an outline echoes the shadow of the pendant light and refers to a ceiling rose. At the end of the room, meanwhile, the client's children's birth dates are etched onto the wall like a tattoo. It's clear that Kiss had fun with colour, too, daring to paint the base of the Prouvé dining table a deep fluoro pink 'to soften its masculinity', and the result works perfectly with the equally bold acid-lime Dargyle of the sofa.

In the master bedroom, Kiss has shown his fondness for deconstructing classic forms and materials, producing a monumental gilded cornice that wraps its way around the room. Reworked from a 17th-century pattern Kiss salvaged from a client's residence, this 'golden snake' has turned what he describes as a boring space into one of grandeur, with both a sense of place and a strong visual focus – qualities he's achieved throughout this home.

Mathias Kiss is represented by Galerie Arnel Soyer, 19-21 Rue Chapon, 75003 Paris (00 33 1 42 55 49 72; arnelsoyer.com)

This page: an Angelo Mangiarotti 'Eros' table (1971) and Marcel Wanders chairs gather on the terrace. Opposite: master artisan Olivier Piel embellished the hallway with trompe l'oeil marble. Prouvé's 'Antony' chair (1954) was the first to persuade the owner to go back design over 20 years ago. The 'Grasse' rug is by the Bouroullec Brothers



Opposite: the windows bear witness to the architectural mishmash caused by the windows on the facade failing to correspond with the floor levels. Above: a Prouvé 'Eros' table (1971) with Marcel Wanders' chairs (1992); its lacquered wall paneling, right, the owner commissioned Kiss to create the 23-panel 'golden snake' for the master bedroom. The sculptural cornice installation was inspired by a 17th-century pattern. Below: hanging a series of 'Prouvé' wall sconces by Charlotte Perriand (1942), also from Galerie Tonus, and a reproduction Prouvé daybed, upholstered in white canvas



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