



## A French gallerist's design-laden apartment in Saint-Germain-des-Prés

HOME / VOGUE LIVING / INTERIORS

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A Haussmannian apartment is pioneering gallerist François Laffanour's latest residence, where original architecture artfully frames his covetable collection of designer treasures.  
*Photographed by Adrien Dirand. Produced by Ana Cardinale.*



*In the living room of this Paris home, Sitzmaschine chair by Josef Hoffmann; Torino stool by Jean Prouvé; console by Charlotte Perriand; Big Cap lamp by Andrea Branzi; Signaux sculpture (on console) by Vassilakis Takis.*

An apartment may seem like an odd choice for gallerist François Laffanour to call home, considering the larger residences he has had. But when the founder of [Galerie Downtown](#) in Paris came upon this timeless space within a quintessential [Haussmann building](#), the decision to call it home was an obvious one. And as it is the base for a key figure in the art world, the abode lends itself to being a showcase of his curator's eye for spontaneity, timeless quality and original spirit.

Laffanour chose the district of [Saint-Germain-des-Prés](#), just a few steps from Café de Flore, where the atmosphere is completely different from his previous homes. "My existence has always been punctuated by moves and as many new houses. Each of them was the mirror of the period I was living in," says the gallerist. "Today I spend a lot of time in a large property in Normandy, which will soon become a cutting-edge and very spectacular place of art. So to find myself in a house with a garden in Paris no longer made sense. And so I chose to live in an apartment.



*In the dining room, table with integrated lamp by Charlotte Perriand and Jean Prouvé; Fauteuil Direction chairs by Jean Prouvé, enquiries for re-issue to Living Edge; Chien sculpture (by fireplace) by Jeff Koons.*

Occupying the entire third floor, Laffanour's new home offers well-preserved charms: mouldings, herringbone oak parquet floors and marble fireplaces in a series of adjoining spaces open to each other. A gallery space with a beautiful perspective effect is lit by windows that generously distribute a soft light. Here, design and contemporary art are one. In this elegant ensemble where the uniformly white walls do not betray the spirit of the space, the curiosity and taste of the master of the house are freely expressed.

The staging is designed with a collection of furniture by the masters of European design in mind, mostly 20th-century architects and designers who have made indelible marks in design: Charlotte Perriand, Pierre Jeanneret, Jean Prouvé or Jean Royère, of whom Laffanour is today one of the eminent specialists but also one of the championing pioneers.



*In the entry, desk by Charlotte Perriand and Pierre Jeanneret; Colonne Lumineuse Signal Petit Signal floor lamp by Serge Mouille; Néon défilant light installation (on wall) by Jenny Holzer; artwork (beyond) by Patrick Raynaud; African wooden sculpture.*

Today, Laffanour's found treasures sell for thousands of euros. Forty years ago, investing in such items was a daring venture. The gallerist made his debut in the design realm at the Paul Bert Serpette market in Saint-Ouen. The flea markets taught him discipline, waking up at dawn to chase the thrill of the hunt. At the end of the 1970s, he opened his first Downtown gallery, then located at rue de Provence, a stone's throw from the Drouot auction house.

Then, in the early 1980s, he moved to rue de Seine on the left side of the namesake river, where some of the greatest antique dealers in Paris were located. This proved to be the tipping point for Laffanour. He displayed through his exhibitions a field then little known at the time: that of the furniture of architects of the 20th century after the second World War. "I was the first to call on the scenographer Jean de Piépape to present the furniture in living rooms," he recalls. "With a lot of effects and few means, the stands were not at all conventional for the time. The idea was to evoke contemporary architecture through colour and concrete and thus create a bridge between architecture and design," he continues. "I wanted to re-create the atmosphere of the habitat and contextualise the furniture. It was so daring that the first biennials refused my stands for fear of the contemporary!"



*In the kitchen, Green Railroad Bridge Tokyo photograph by Thomas Struth; sculpture (above door) by Masakatsu Iwamoto.*

Laffanour denies being a real collector, but his Paris home reveals a whole universe made up of beloved pieces. The instinctive way in which furniture is placed and surrounded by works of art testifies to a playful elegance that avoids rigidity, from the entrance with a desk by Charlotte Perriand to the dining room with a focal-point table by Charlotte Perriand and Jean Prouvé from the library of the Maison de l'Etudiant in Paris.

"In my previous house this table was stored in the cellar, it did not fit in any of the rooms," he says. "It was also one of the reasons that led me to move. It suggests great rigour and great elegance. There is an obvious simplicity as well as luxury even if the materials are not at all luxurious. Aside from the finish, its large format makes it visually impactful."



*In the entry, Robespierre sculpture by Nam June Paik; all other artworks unknown by artists unknown.*

In the all-white living room, an inviting curved sofa flirts with modernist armchairs by Jean Prouvé. The same feeling can be found in the primary bedroom, with a large space deliberately uncluttered, where an Isamu Noguchi lamp and an armchair by Pierre Jeanneret form a gentle break complementing the classic appeal of the original architecture. "At home, the furniture and objects change all the time, and the house takes on a new look each time," says Laffanour. Here nothing is fixed, nothing is solemn. Asked what the role of designers—those he has specialised in—contribute to contemporary interiors, Laffanour thinks of Charlotte Perriand. "In her, there is a humanity, an obvious practical and usual dimension." This need for design to showcase interest and function, as well as a need for true connection, is what the gallerist has built his career on and what his considered pied-à-terre has in spades.