

An Apartment in the Center of Paris, Inspired by Venice

A couple who own an interior design firm found a residence that could also serve as a showroom for their work.



Nathan Litera and Lyatt Samama renovated an apartment in a 1910 building in Paris to create a new home that doubles as a showroom for their interior design firm. In Ms. Samama's office, works by Henry de Waroquier, left, and Mr. Litera with Pedro Kogen adorn the walls. Matthieu Salvaing

When Nathan Litera and Lyatt Samama began looking for a new home in the heart of Paris, they needed a place that would serve as more than just as a residence. The couple also wanted something that would double as a showroom for their interior design firm, where they could put the full breadth of their talents on display.

MICHEL REIN PARIS/BRUSSELS

Mr. Litera, 41, is an architect, and Ms. Samama, 40, is a former lawyer. Together they are the married principals of a design firm also named Nathan Litera. At the same time they were looking to grow their business, they also decided to have a child, Shay, now 3, which made their old apartment feel a little tight.

The creation of their new home began when they saw an Haussmann-style apartment stretching out over 2,400 square feet on the fourth floor of a 1910 building near Paris's Parc Monceau. The space got great natural light, but was in rundown condition after being abused as an office for years. That made it perfect for Mr. Litera and Ms. Samama.

"When you buy something in bad condition, you feel free to do whatever you want," Mr. Litera said. "The possibilities are larger."

After closing on the space for 2.5 million euros (\$2.7 million) in June 2021, he and Ms. Samama aimed to conceive a home that would blend French and Italian design influences. "We wanted something really typical of Italy — Italy in Paris," Ms. Samama said. "And, more specifically, Venice, which is a place we find really inspiring."

"When you're an interior designer, you have to create a home that reflects your work," Mr. Litera added, noting he and Ms. Samama also wanted to fill the space with contemporary design and art. "We are trying to give a complete experience to our clients. This apartment



Ms. Samama and Mr. Litera in the living room. The sofa is a custom design with fringe, the floor lamp is by Mauro Fabbro and the art is by Dora Jeridi. Dmitry Kostyukov for The New York Times

is used as a showroom to show a collection of furniture and all the finishes that we propose to our clients for kitchens, bathrooms, walls, curtains, fabric, et cetera.”

One of those finishes is Venetian Marmorino plaster, which they used to coat walls throughout the apartment in a warm peachy pink. Venetian glass and mirror also feature prominently — from vintage light fixtures to new custom mirrors, which Mr. Litera designed and had made in Murano — to conceal TV screens above the fireplace mantels in the living room and primary bedroom.

Arched doorways with plaster star-shaped decorations are another nod to spaces that Mr. Litera and Ms. Samama remembered from their travels. “These are very classical details” in Italian palazzi, Ms. Samama said.



Mr. Litera designed the dining table and light fixtures in the dining room as part of his Altana collection. The chairs are antiques from an Italian castle. Matthieu Salvaing



The walls of the primary bedroom are upholstered in cashmere with oak trim. The art is by José María Sicilia, the vintage chandelier is from Seguso and the brass sconces are by Jules Wabbes. Matthieu Salvaing.



The primary bathroom is finished in fluted plaster and Italian marble. The framed photo is by Lucien Clergue. Mr. Litera designed the plumbing fixtures with Volevatch. Matthieu Salvaing



At the entrance, a vintage light fixture by Max Ingrand hangs near a Lacquered console Mr. Litera designed. The art is by Anna-Eva Bergman. Matthieu Salvaing.



The primary suite has a compact dressing area. The photograph is by Julien Drach. Matthieu Salvaing

Fluted details, recalling the fluting found on Roman columns, are another recurring feature. In one hallway, the couple worked with Ateliers Gohard to develop a wall treatment of thick fluted plaster. For the fireplace mantels, they made surrounds from fluted marbles — black-and-white Grand Antique in the living room and a more calming Bubble onyx in the primary bedroom. Even the dining table, which Mr. Litera designed as part of his Altana furniture collection, is fluted green onyx.

To create the wood parquet floors, which look original but are newly installed, they reclaimed antique material from a French château, then aged new wood to match it when they didn't have enough.

To build the apartment, they called in favors from collaborators and friends, many of whom did the work for free or at a dramatically reduced rate. Without those favors, Ms. Samama said, the cost would have been between about \$750 and \$900 per square foot.

Within this new architectural envelope, they mixed furniture designed by Mr. Litera, including sofas, armchairs and marble tables, with vintage pieces ranging from Scandinavian brass pendant lamps by Paavo Tynell to wooden armchairs recovered from an Italian castle.

For art, they selected works from emerging contemporary artists, including pieces by Giulia Andreani, Edgar Sarin and Dora Jeridi, some of whom they discovered while serving on the contemporary art acquisition committee at the Centre Pompidou. Their new home was finally complete at the beginning of 2023.

Even though it functions as a show house for potential clients, Mr. Litera and Ms. Samama insist the apartment is a family home first, even with all the fine materials.

"It's a burning topic, the idea of having a lot of design and art with toddlers running around," Ms. Samama said. "But now that Shay is growing, we see that he has an eye for things. It's very stimulating for everyone."



An arched niche in the kitchen is one of the couple's favorite places to spend time. The floors are a mix of reclaimed materials and new wood that has been aged to match. Matthieu Salvaing.



A seating area between the living and dining rooms is equipped with chairs by Pierre Jeanneret and a painting by Edgar Sarin. Matthieu Salvaing.