Sky’s the Limit

Guided by childhood memories of southern France, a leading architect recast her moody Paris apartment as a free-flowing, sun-soaked sanctuary.

photography: gaelle lebouton  design: manuelle Gautrand & interiors: words: dan f. stapleton & jeremy collingham
Supporting roles: Many of the objects architect and homeowner Manueldie Gaudron chose for this area are white or clear, allowing the colourful elements to take centre stage. The molten glass lamp is vintage Murano Mazzega, the 1970s plane coffee table is by Willy Ballez and the wall lights are by Flos. A Danish & Campion rug adds another shade of pink to the mix. Seventies scene. For cordially, Manuelie opted for pieces from the 1970s, including the wood-hand bamboo and rattan bar stools in the kitchen (opposite).
MANUELLE GAUTRAND HAS LIVED IN PARIS for more than two decades, and in that time she has put her heritage to good use. As someone who was raised in Marseille, she particularly wanted to bring the qualities of colour and natural light into the apartment. "As a child, I was particularly attached to the brightness of colour and natural light," she says. So, when her two grown children recently moved out of the family's top-floor apartment in the Marais district, she decided it was time to infuse the historic home with some Mediterranean charm.

DIVINE LIGHT Manuela and her husband had two main objectives: to improve the apartment's flow and bring in natural light throughout the day. Their first goal was achieved simply by removing some of the internal walls, but the second required serious thought. After careful considerations, Manuela realized that the apartment's striped east could accommodate a long skylight, stretching from east to west. "It was my chance to create a relationship between the home and the sky," she says. To her delight, the development application was approved.

WONDER WALL "The glass roof means that the eastern wall is now lighted all day," says Manuela. She painted the wall in what she calls "Palack Yellow," releasing the balcony of the abstract impressionist paintings. Palack's light floods the spaces and brings a sense of light and space and two more hero colours - baby pink and celadon green - channel the breezy joie de vivre of the French Riviera.

MOOD SWING Rather than adhere to one style code, Manuela chose to experiment with different moods in her home. Upstairs, in a nod to Japan, she applied a dark varnish to the floorboards. "It gives a little bit more intimacy in the upper level," she says, and the glossiness means that, even if it's quite dark, there's always light reflecting. Downstairs, in the kitchen and dining areas, travertine surfaces and an heirloom commode nod to the apartment's 17th-century roots. After all, says Manuela, "in the Marais, history is in the air."
Leading ladies

On the dining area walls, portraits depicting prominent women lend to Marwilla's eclectic taste. The horseshoe lights are by Ape Lighting, and a Le Corbusier light is above the sideboard. Worlds collide: Marwilla (opposite, left), one of Brisbane's highest-profile architects, has a knack for fusing historic buildings into the present. Pay homage: The apartment is dotted with pieces by French artists, including the Nemo 'Lamp de Marwilla' by Le Corbusier in the kitchen (opposite, right). A travertine kitchen island is positioned in the centre of this room so that Marwilla could interact with family and friends while cooking. "It encourages us all to come together in the kitchen," she says. »
Style tip: Positioning art off-centre, as seen here, can prevent a space from feeling too rigid or austere.
Ways of living

In a space around 100m², light plays a significant role in achieving a versatile and stylish home. Rich textures and natural materials are key.

1. Cape white wall and polished floors give a minimalistic feel to the furniture and provide warmth to the space.

2. Using multiple shades of the same colour, such as the brown tones in this space, can help create a warm and inviting atmosphere.

3. Natural materials, including timber and stone, add a warm and welcoming touch to the interior.
Sunny disposition: A wall mirror makes the guest bedroom feel open and spacious while offsetting the dark floor. The rug is by Forgari, Cils & Cigar tiles by Turkia, the blanket is by Thassos, and the slim overhead light is from Lumen Lighting.
shop it! Be inspired by the curved shapes and retro vibes of Manuelle’s home.

2. Tradition ‘Flowerpot’ VP1 pendant in Beige Red, $3500, Cult.
4. HK Living ceramic vase with ribbed base in Rustic, $80, House of Orange.
5. Copenhagen acacia wood serving bowl, $89 for small, West Elm.
7. Designer Rugs ‘Venus Series’ rug in Red (1.4m x 2.2m), $3259, The Feeder.
8. Colours vase in Green, $159, Maison Balzac.
9. Como marble dining table in White Marble, $2200 for 1.2m, Coco Republic.
11. TikTok whipstitched virgin wool blanket, $358, Mattressnation.
14. Cosmic Egg artwork (50cm x 50cm), $9200, Daniel O’Toole.
15. AYTM ‘Stilla’ rug in Amber, $638, Royal Design.

Colours and finishes