

Avenue Montaigne, since time immemorial the place in Paris for top couturiers to have their domicile, is one of the French capital's prime locations. Designers Gillian Brown and Rob Wetzels were given free rein in furnishing a 360 square metre apartment there. They have created a modern living space, while duly respecting the original Parisian architecture. The interior is primarily in shades of white and is both inviting and comfortable. The commanding accent colour is Yves Klein blue, in keeping



YVES KLEIN BLUE IN A PARIS APARTMENT

with the client's love of the colour blue. "We wanted to give the owners – when they come here – the feeling of really being in Paris. The large expanses of windows over the entire width of the apartment contribute to that feeling – they make for movement of light and thus enhance the dynamism of the spaces." Wetzels Brown design studio has acquired an international reputation as interior specialists in the field of private jets and luxury yachts. Here, on terra firma – i.e. Paris – they have created a striking showpiece of their talents.



text + photos: Hans Fonk

Yves Klein blue was an important source of inspiration for the furnishing of this majestic apartment at Avenue Montaigne in Paris. Designers Gillian Brown and Rob Wetzels from Amsterdam drew inspiration from Anish Kapoor's work when shaping some elements. Top left: an Yves Klein blue wall in the bathroom servicing the master suite, with a gold object by Miquel Mont. Below that: designers Gillian Brown and Rob Wetzels in their studio in the centre of Amsterdam.

Adjoining: detail of the combined living and dining room. Prior to the renovation, there was a wall where the cupboard in the foreground now stands – the designers had it removed.

The lamp in the foreground is by Prandina. The striking blue-and-white artwork 'Cosmos Tops' is by Yayoi Kusama. The dining room chairs are by Promemoria and the table was custom-made for this apartment.

Overleaf

The enormous living-cum-dining room where daylight enters freely through the large windows. The spatial effect is reinforced by the large white-upholstered sofas by Minotti. The lamp back right is by Foscarini and the loudspeakers are by B&W; the vases are by Driade. The large artwork – Sweet Life I – is by Zhu Wei. Doorknobs have been made after an original Parisian design.

The opening to the hall is just visible, with the roomy kitchen beyond. Ceiling light by Modular. The white chest was designed by Wetzels Brown.

There is art from the owners' private collection in almost every room in the apartment. The collection includes work by Yayoi Kusama, Tsering Nyandak, Nortse, Aaron Young, Shoni, Zhu Wei, Douglas Gordon, David Bailey, Ray Johnson and Yair Barak.





Left: at the transitional space between the living room and master suite there are three cone-shaped objects. Wetzels Brown designed the red object as a wardrobe and the Yves Klein blue 'pod' houses a complete guest toilet. It was constructed applying techniques found in luxury yacht building, and made and tested in Italy. The colossus, weighing one ton, was shipped to Paris in sections and reassembled there.

Adjoining: the interior of the toilet pod with sanitaryware by Laufen/Alessi.

Top right: the enormous living space with the succession of windows which extends into the master suite in the background. The furniture is by Minotti and the coffee table by Christian Liaigre.

Below: the master suite looking through to the hallway and the bathroom. The blue lamp is by Hervé van der Straeten and the blue glass object by Anna Torfs.

The bed linen is by Loro Piana and the rug by Tai Ping. The white sofas are by Poltrona Frau and the magazine rack by B&B Italia. The bathroom taps are by Dornbracht and the white container is by Oscar Maschera; the mirror reflects a gold work by artist Miquel Mont.



Interior designer Gillian Brown and architect Rob Wetzels work with their team of international designers from a studio in the centre of Amsterdam. They are well known for their no-nonsense approach to every new project, and, in the process, pinpoint the core values. The result is a product tailor made to suit the client's specific requirements. It makes no difference whether they are fitting out a luxury yacht or private jet, or a modern apartment or hotel, their ongoing quest for the essence is always at the forefront. Their close collaboration with their clients does not entail reaching compromises, but in fact generating ideas, in order to reach an optimum result.

That was the case with this project, at the prestigious Avenue Montaigne, where a vast complex was recently converted into a block of luxury apartments.

"In 2007, when we embarked on this project, the apartment was an office subdivided into lots of small rooms and far from respectful of the quality of the building. You completely lost your bearings. The first thing we did was to return to the original structure, removing all the non-original additions. We created an interior based on that original situation and tailored to the client. We actually re-

moved only one old wall, to create a large living and dining room. And for a modern touch, we added the Yves Klein blue colour", Rob Wetzels explained. He went on: "In an architectural gesture, we left the long line of windows along the entire length of the apartment. When the doors to the master suite are open, all five large bands of windows can be seen, as a visual reference to the overall dimensions. On sunny days light floods in, evoking an ever-changing dynamic ambience which depends on the time of day. All the rooms on the courtyard side also have daylight, meaning that the link with outdoors is guaranteed and you can always check on the weather."

Gillian: "We wanted to make it a proper French apartment: so when the clients get up in the morning, they needn't wonder which city they're in – it must clearly be Paris. That's why we had experienced craftsmen make the ceiling ornaments in the authentic manner and had all the floors remade in the original motif. The same applied for the doorknobs, which were reproduced after the old design. We also sought to retain the original ceiling heights throughout, though the ceilings are actually about 20 centimetres lower to accommodate insulation, air conditioning and lighting. We have meanwhile heard that this is the only apartment in the complex with the original Parisian touch. Classical yet modern, and with all 'mod cons' of the 21st century."

The apartment comprises a roomy hallway-cum-lounge with access to the kitchen on one side and the living room on the other. At the end of the lounge there is an opening to the room containing the pièce-de-résistance: the Yves Klein blue guest toilet designed like a spatial egg. The designers applied







Above: one of the two guest rooms with a desk by Promemoria, a large Casamilano mirror, lamps by Ferrum Plus and Axis 71, bedside lamps by Ochre and bed linen by Missoni and Frette. The artwork entitled 'Childhood Memory' is by Nortse.

Below: the hallway with a Casamilano mirror on the left, a red artwork on the wall and a silver-coloured table by Hervé van der Straeten. The black seating element in the centre is by Vitra and the black lamp by B&B Italia. Adjoining: one of the two guest bathrooms with Dornbracht taps, Falper sanitaryware and accessories by Alessi.



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The master suite with a view through to the sitting room beyond. The armchairs are by Poltrona Frau and the chair by Minotti, as is the leather-clad seating object behind the Panthon chair. Bed by Minotti.

Adjoining: one of the colourful bathrooms with a glass shower wall by Santambrogio, taps by Dornbracht and shallow basins by Alessi. The bathroom sanitaryware is by Falper, Duravit, Adodrain and Scirocco, with taps by Dornbracht and Vola. Below that: one of the two guest rooms with Alessi objects displayed in a recess in the hall, in front of the bed a Minotti ottoman. On the Minotti bed fabrics from Loro Piana.

Overleaf

The kitchen bathed in light that pours in from the courtyard through large windows. Here the designers Gillian Brown and Rob Wetzels have created a comfortable setting overlooking the stately Parisian buildings. The kitchen itself is by Yarena. The white chairs in the background are by Cassina and the metal chairs are by Emco. The glass objects on the work top are by Anna Torfs. Taps by Dornbracht; ovens by Miele. For the tableware and accessories Gillian and Rob selected choice pieces from the collections of Legle, Sieger, Stelton, Christoffe, Guy Degrenne, Carlo Moretti, Fürstenberg, Ercuis, JL Coquet, Saint Louis and Rosenthal.

techniques from the world of yachting to create an entire toilet with pantograph doors opening to both sides. It was built in Italy and tested there before being shipped in parts to Paris, where it was reassembled. The space also contains a cone-shaped red wardrobe and a round gold chest of drawers, and serves to link up the service kitchen and guest accommodation.

On the other side of the hall-lounge there is a second passage to the master suite. All bedrooms have their own bathroom.

The designers decided, together with the clients, to base the colour scheme on white with dark accents (but not black) and Yves Klein blue. The white oasis is effectively interrupted with artworks from the owners' collection. The expanse of whiteness is best appreciated in the spacious living room, where there are roomy Minotti sofas. That space combines with the formal dining room, with a low cupboard designed by WetzelsBrown Studio dividing the two rooms.

"We proposed the large white space and the clients approved. It's turned out extremely well. Everyone who visits is amazed at the pleasant ambience – in daytime with the light from outside, as well as at night."

The designers also achieved the same feeling in the large kitchen, which also has large windows and mirrors reflecting the light from outside and the traditional Parisian architecture.

They were given carte-blanche for the project, with the request to transform the space to the very best of their ability. They already knew the client because they had been working on the interior furnishing of a luxury sailing yacht. Gillian and Rob were invited to visit him at his home in Tel Aviv to get an idea of how he lived there.

"While we were there we worked on the initial designs for the apartment. As we were making sketches he sometimes came and looked over our shoulders. The brief was actually quite succinct: he was sure we'd understand him! We followed up the sketches with visuals – we always do that early on, to give a good idea of how the design will look in real life. It means a client understands what to expect", Rob Wetzels explained.

The make-over took three years, most of which was spent carrying out architectural interventions. An army of skilful French craftsmen were there to help execute the work according to plan.

"Our challenge was to make the apartment as pleasant as possible, so the client would spend more time there than originally intended. And we succeeded!" the designers announced.



