

PERFECT CANVAS

Symmetry is essential for Parisian interior designer Sarah Dray, who loves nothing more than layering classical spaces with her take on contemporary style. A place for everything, and everything in its place.

PHOTOGRAPHY STEPHAN JULLIARD
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ARTFULLY PLACED
On top of a set of travertine coffee tables from Beije Avenue in the living room is a trio of ceramics by Sandra Zeenni (1831 Art Gallery), Antoinette Faragallah (Chahan Gallery) and Maarten Stuer (Aurélien Gendras). The chaise longue is the iconic 'LC4' model, while armchair to the right was created by Olivier Santini for Mojow.



LIVING ROOM LUXE

Painting by Belgian artist Guy Leclercq (Galerie Dutko) above a console with wooden vessels by Martin & Dowling (Galerie Mouvements Modernes).
Opposite: Set of '0414' chairs from Gallotti&Radice at a custom table.



“I love working with a pure, contemporary style within a more classical setting.”

WHEN DREAMS FLOAT FREE

A custom alabaster light fixture hangs above another travertine table from Beije Avenue in the kitchen. The chairs are the 'Baba' model by Emmanuelle Simon and the vintage dish is Danish (Galerie KR D, Paris). In the background a number of ceramics by Geraldine Pinault stand on the Taj Mahal quartzite countertop. On the shelf above, a pair of artworks by John Carter and Jean-Pierre Le Bars (Galerie Wagner) flank glasses and bowls from CFOC.

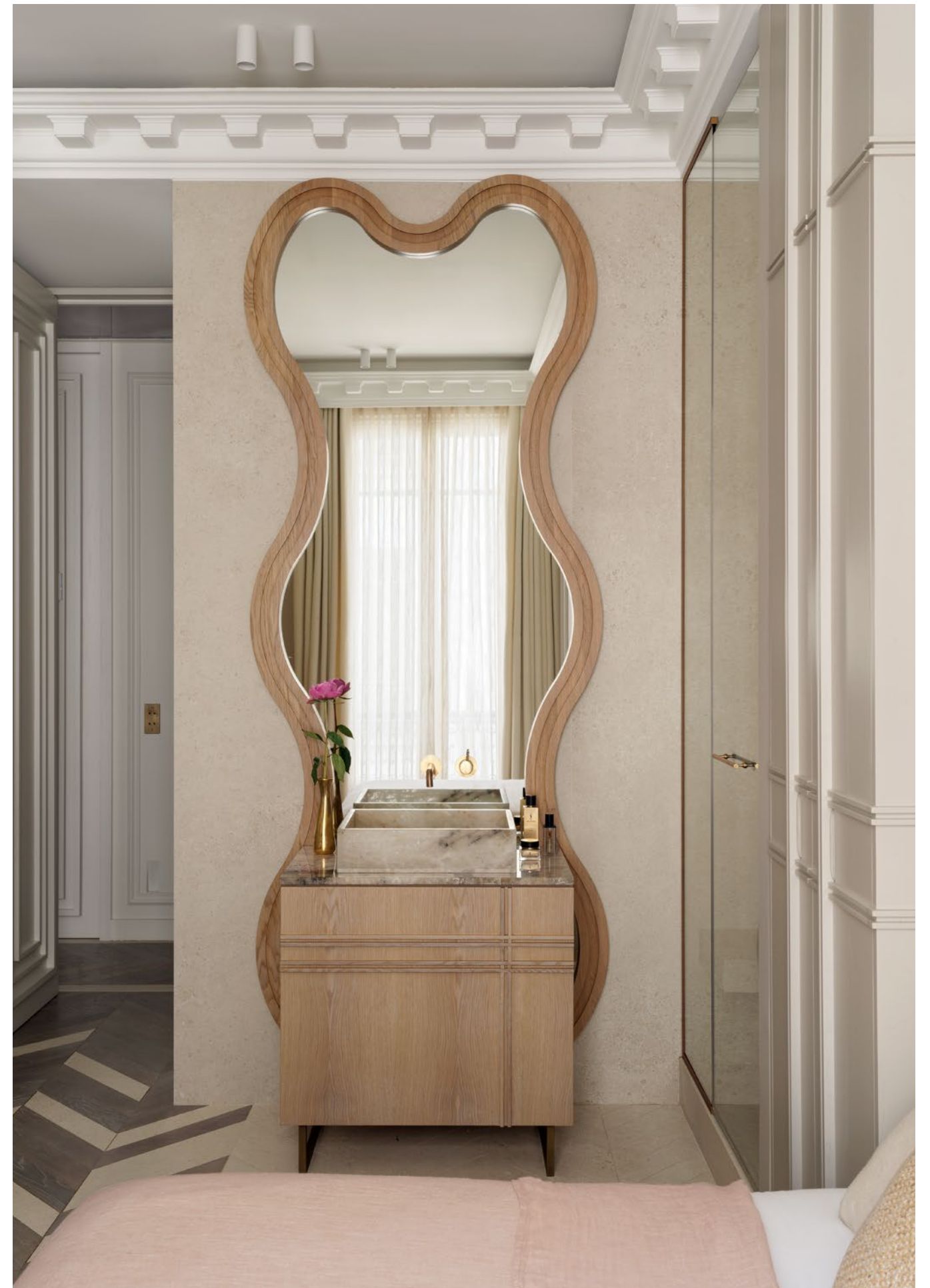
Opposite: Interior designer Sarah Dray trained with Jacques Garcia and Isabelle Stanislas before setting up her own firm in 2010.



TEXTURE RICH

In the primary bedroom, the bedhead, alabaster pendants and nightstands are all custom. The bedside lamps are the 'Nocta_03' model from Denis Castaing (Aurélien Gendras, Paris) and the bedding is from Lissoy.

Opposite: Each of the three girls' rooms feature open bathrooms. In the eldest daughter's room, a wavy custom mirror inspired by Ettore Sottsass' 'Ultrafragola' model has been paired with a vanity made from oak and Patagonia rose marble.



“Fluting adds a sumptuous, yet subtle effect to an interior, and a very bespoke touch.”

The Paris-based interior designer Sarah Dray has an obsession with order. “In my own apartment, nothing is ever out of place,” she says. “When things are messy, it makes me depressed.” That fondness for rigour is certainly evident in the projects she creates. She confesses a love of symmetry, favours strong axes, and likes for everything to be perfectly precise. Take this apartment located in classical Haussmannian building on the French capital’s Right Bank, where a host of carefully considered architectural details frame and structure the different spaces.

The entry hall features a stone floor laid out in a strict, grid-like pattern. The pared-down panelling in the main reception rooms gives their walls a regular rhythm, and the sinks in the primary bathroom are housed in an arched niche whose form dialogues with the curved shape of the adjacent tub. And if there is one design element she favours more than any other, it is no doubt fluting. “It adds a sumptuous, yet subtle effect to an interior and a very bespoke touch,” she explains.

Dray initially trained with two of France’s most prestigious decorators. While at design school, she did an internship in the offices of Jacques Garcia (of Hôtel Costes fame), but had little direct contact with the designer himself. She simply remembers seeing him from afar, wearing bright-red socks and green crocodile-skin loafers. Her two six-month stints with Isabelle Stanislas, who is best known for revamping three staterooms in the official residence of the French president – the Elysée Palace – left more of an impression.

“It’s thanks to her that I really discovered my aesthetic voice,” notes Dray. “Just like her, I love working with a pure, contemporary style within a more classical setting.”

Since founding her own firm in 2010, she has worked largely under the radar, despite attracting a number of celebrity clients. She has most notably renovated a townhouse for France’s most famous TV talk show host, Laurent Ruquier, and also recently completed the interiors of the Hôtel Tinah in Saint Tropez. The majority of her commissions to date, however, have been large-scale Parisian apartments, like this 225m² unit belonging to a doctor and her dentist husband, with three young daughters.

Before seeing it, the wife had previously visited dozens of other flats, but always alone. “My husband places great trust in me,” she explains. “He always says he doesn’t need to see a place. If I like it, then he’ll automatically like it, too.” As fate would have it, they ended up checking out this one together. “On the day of

the appointment, his alarm clock didn’t go off so he was still at home and I managed to persuade him to come with me.”

What they discovered was not particularly prepossessing. “The former owner had lived there for the whole of her life ... some 93 years,” says Dray. “Nothing was up to code.”

There were squat toilets and a plethora of stains from successive water leakages. As for the electrics, they were apparently *un drame!* That said, it was in many ways a perfect canvas for Dray, given her passion for typical Parisian architecture. “I’m very much grounded in that aesthetic,” she says. “I’ve never seen anything more beautiful.”

The renovation took some 18 months and involved the space being largely reconfigured. Among other things, Dray extended the kitchen by enclosing a light well and created a number of well-aligned openings in the reception rooms. “I don’t like doors,” she says. “The more a space is free flowing, the better it is.”

As in all her projects, she displayed a deep respect for the past. “I always like to work with the stylistic codes of the building in which a space is located,” she says. “For me, it’s essential.”

Here, she reinstated a number of typical Haussmannian features – not only the wall mouldings, but also crenellated cornices, chevron parquet and marble fireplaces. She also tends to favour a calm, soothing palette: ask her for one thing you’ll never find in her interiors and she replies, “The colour red.” Interestingly, the request for a pink primary bathroom here came from the husband. Dray responded by pairing an expressively veined blush-toned onyx with a wonderfully textural travertine.

The first piece of furniture to find its way into the apartment was the 4m-long de Sede ‘DS-600’ sofa in the living room. “For me, it brings extraordinary character to any space. It’s like a work of art,” she declares.

In the dining room next door, she installed an arrangement of dozens of custom ceiling lights made from one of her favourite materials – alabaster. “I wanted to give the impression of a starlit sky,” she says.

Her approach to decorating children’s rooms, meanwhile, is to not make them look too childish. “I never adorn the walls with pink flamingos or hot air balloons,” she asserts. “I want them to be easy to adapt as the kids get older.”

Here, she decked each out with the same architectural details as in the rest of the flat, and fitted them with open bathrooms. “That way, each of the girls can enjoy their own independence,” explains Dray. “Once they close the door, it’s as if they have their own studio apartment.” Which, with a bit of luck, they keep nice and tidy!



FLUTED SYMPHONY

Pink onyx was combined with travertine in the primary bathroom. The fixtures are from Gessi and the stool is ‘Signature Object 6’ by Daniel Berlin (Galerie Maria Wettergren).