

MINIMALISM IN PARIS





With an extensive portfolio of unique and iconic realisations, Nicolas Schuybroek has made a name for himself both at home and abroad. Tranquillity is a recurring theme in his projects, which is reflected in his sober, timeless and minimalist designs. B Apartment is entirely in line with his earlier work and we are happy to show you around this Parisian home.

Those who have been following our magazine for a while, know that Imagicasa is a big fan of Nicolas Schuybroek. With his eponymous Brussels-based studio, the renowned architect takes a holistic approach to every project, making no distinction between architecture, interior design and furniture. Respectfully dealing with the context and thereby evoking a certain atmosphere, in which the uniqueness of each project lies, is the thread that runs through his work. Thanks to his great eye for detail, he creates well-thought-out and authentic designs, which are sober and minimalistic, but radiate warmth thanks to the use of different textures and rough materials. B Apartment was no different. For this project, Nicolas Schuybroek was contacted by Barbara Boccara, co-founder of the famous Parisian fashion brand Ba&Sh. 'Barbara and her husband had been following our work for quite some time,' the architect begins. 'The click occurred when they saw projects like S House, where rougher and tactile materials were used and the whole still looked warm.' A style that the couple also liked in their own home in Paris, an apartment in the typical Haussmann style. 'It was a beautiful and light residence, overlooking Avenue Victor-Hugo in the 16th arrondissement and with a side view of the Arc de Triomphe,' we hear from



the architect. 'However, it had been renovated in a fairly sterile manner. The black and white elements made the rooms look too austere and "designy" and hid many of the original architectural details that we valued so much in the apartment,' says Schuybroek.

Something that Barbara, a frequent traveller, wanted to avoid. 'After a long trip, she did not want to come home to a stiff apartment or a place that feels like a design hotel. So, our main challenge was to restore the original spirit and charm of the home.' To do this, Schuybroek followed his well-known holistic approach, where the design started from

the architectural image. 'Despite the fact that this apartment was an interior project, the first thing we did was think about the essential issues architecturally. For example, we had to find a way to create the right proportions, circulations and light; because although the residence is on the fourth floor and therefore flooded with light all day, this only gave a seemingly contradictory feeling of overwhelming calm. We did this, among other things, by restructuring the volumes in the dwelling. Only after this phase was worked out, did we think about the materials and the right furniture and art selections.' The architect introduced minimal and tactile

materials into the project, which are rather unusual for a typical Parisian apartment. In this way, Schuybroek created a warm design that mixes the past and present in a meaningful way. 'Barbara herself is busy every day with textures, fabrics, materials and colours. So, this project had to radiate absolute calm, with a limited palette of materials, sober and tactile, but warm and welcoming,' says the architect.

AIRY LAYOUT

To start with, the rooms were re-balanced by means of an airy layout. Schuybroek moved the kitchen from the back of the house to the front, thus creating space to accommodate two walk-in closets and a pantry. A calm and neutral palette was chosen that runs like a red thread through the entire residence. 'We introduced strong but subdued material el-



ements and only one finish of each material was chosen, so the palette was kept as limited as possible.' The mix of wood, metal and natural stone harmonise beautifully together in terms of colour and texture, and the wide oak panels for the floor, Canon De Fusil metal, sandblasted Chambolle sandstone elements and clay finish for the walls also go well with the Belgian linens that recur throughout the home. Thus, architectural volumes were created that are visually calm and 'quiet', timeless and neutral and perfect for relaxing in without having to take into account trends in the outside world.

A sensual essence of roughness and elegance flows through the whole apartment, thanks to the perfect blending of furniture and art pieces. 'The idea was to let the tactile mate-

rials flow into the furniture and artworks. There is a certain roughness in the furniture and I believe that really enhances the whole project,' the architect said in a previous interview. One example is the 'tree trunk table' in the living room, with solid sandblasted afromosia wood and charred tree legs, which Schuybroek designed himself. 'The dining table brings a sense of the outdoors into the interior and thus blurs the boundary between the two.' The custom-made piece is flanked by chairs with grass seats, walnut and Danish cord, designed by George Nakashima Woodworkers. Several other iconic design pieces by Rick Owens, Jean Royère, Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret adorn the spaces, drawing a line of texture and tactility through the residence. 'The furniture is a mix of collectible design, which was purchased during the pro-





cess – either vintage or new – as well as pieces that were completely custom-designed, such as the dining table,’ explains the architect. In the living room, a large sofa from Italian brand Living Divani forms the central piece, which Schuybroek upholstered in Belgian

linen. He complemented it with a few beautiful elements, such as an LC14 stool in painted wood by Le Corbusier, a concrete coffee table by Kalou Dubus, the Grand Totem metal floor lamp by Serge Mouille and the Ours Polaire armchair by Jean Royère covered in a Pierre Frey fabric, thus creating a beautiful whole.

SPECIAL BALANCE

The works of art also sought a special balance between some beautiful smaller works, such as by American sculptor Richard Nonas – ‘one of my favourite artists’ – and sleeker works, such as those by Belgian painter and sculptor Harold Ancart. ‘Several works by Nonas hang in the apartment, providing a creative guide and evoking a sense of wonder, balance and continuity in the home. At the same time, the statement residence retains a sense of playfulness, as Harold Ancart’s painting, entitled *Perfect Idea, after You Have No Idea*, which hangs in the hall, also makes clear,’ we hear from the architect.

A SENSUAL ESSENCE OF ROUGHNESS AND ELEGANCE

Although the result is beautiful, designing B Apartment was not without its challenges. ‘Structural work and a complete renewal of techniques and circulations in a Haussmann building is never easy. Everything must be approved by the co-owners and the architect of the building. In addition, we also experience enormous time pressure on these types of projects in order to cause as little inconvenience as possible,’ we hear.

Despite these challenges, it turned out to be a beautiful project, entirely in line with the renowned architect’s earlier work.

Moreover, that work has now been collected in an impressive monograph *Selected Works Volume One*, which will be published by German publishing house Hatje Cantz at the end of October. The illustrated work will offer insight into the multifaceted career of the exceptional Belgian architect and promises to be a truly unique collector’s work. A publication that Imagicasa is already very much looking forward to!

(Text: Nathalie Van Laer)

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