



INTERIOR

Text: Ditte Van Doninck

# THIERRY LEMAIRE

For twenty years, Thierry Lemaire has been a figurehead in the world of architecture. He is not only an architect and interior designer, but above all an aesthete as well. From luxury apartments to private homes, he successfully completed every assignment and left his own recognisable mark on it. As a great connoisseur of 20th- and 21st-century decorative art, he opened his art gallery in the heart of Paris in 2017. We talked to Lemaire about his work, his life and his dreams.





Although, Lemaire graduated as an architect, he changed course in the 1990s and started his career in interior design. “I wanted to express my freedom in a creative job with a very open mind for inspiring talents. In my opinion, this could be done more in interior and furniture design,” says Lemaire. His story begins in Paris where he was allowed to customise a home. The result was so convincing that word-of-mouth advertising did its job and Lemaire’s career quickly took off. “I left the world of architecture behind me and devoted myself exclusively to interior design.”

His style developed further as he began to realise more and more projects. For the chalets in Gstaad, he used a very different style than the traditional look of the mountain shed. This made him and his designs

even more famous. Rough and dark timbers predominated and were illuminated by flamboyant and remarkable colours. This innovative style led to many more new assignments. During the inflow of different projects, he discovered his talent for scenography and started to draw furniture sketches himself. His passion for decorative art in the Jansen style, a bombastic castle style, resulted in both spectacular and intimate scenographies that gained international fame, but his furniture sketches also opened the doors to various collaborations.

**FROM MILAN TO ABU DHABI**  
Since 2013, Lemaire has been working for none other than Fendi Casa and Fendi Roma, departments of the prestigious Italian couture brand. He is responsible for both the design of the furniture for their interior collection and the design of the flagship stores. At last year’s Milan Design Week, Lemaire took care of Fendi

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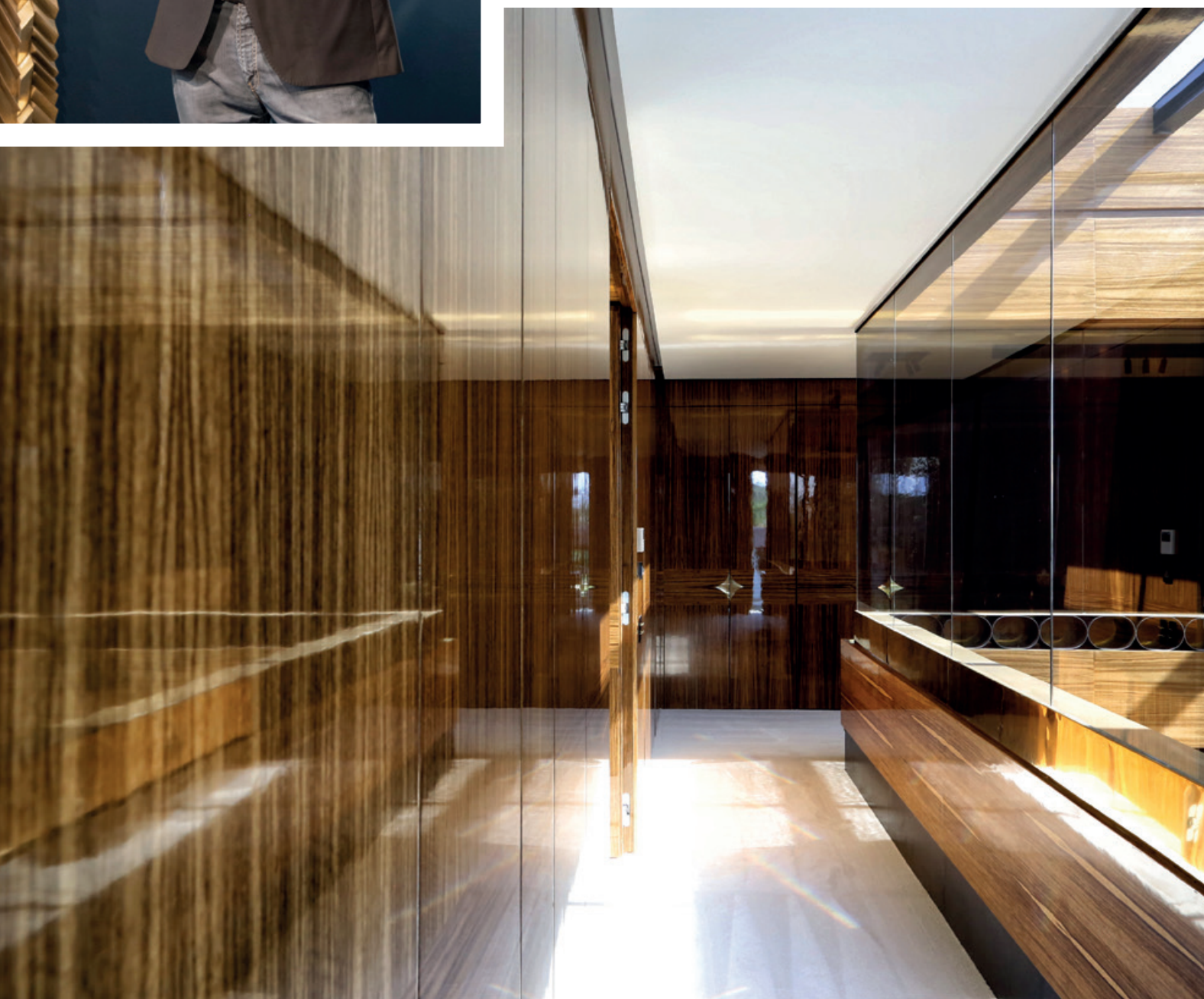


Casa's scenography and even developed a capsule collection that included the famous 'XXL Beaune' table. Designed from an exceptional marble, it attracted quite a bit of attention. At the same time, the workaholic also designs furniture lines for the American brand Holly Hunt and created the interior and furniture for the boutique of Parisian couturier Stéphane Rolland in Abu Dhabi. Wideley followed by the press, his scenographies gained a lot of recognition.

"I've always been interested in volumes and special materials. You can see that clearly in my designs. It is a way for me to bring the soul back to certain places." Driven by this strong sense of proportions, Lemaire came up with the designs for the Yves Gastou Gallery exhibition

stand at the Biennale des Antiquaires in Paris in 2014. Also Lemaire's latest creation, the Automobile Club de France, was completely transformed on the basis of this interest. It became a mixture of 18th century style and contemporary pieces. Each unique piece in the interior spreads a timeless perfume. Think of noble materials such as Macassar ebony, oak and leather. The various rooms were finished by Lemaire with precious metals as bronze and custom-made, streamlined furniture. His signature style, a mix of sophistication and simplicity, can be found in each of his projects.

Interior design or furniture design? "If they ask me what I like best, I'm not going to be able to answer it. It is hard to work on an interior without thinking about the



decoration, including furniture arrangement, lighting, materials, you name it. I have to say that the pleasure I have in discovering a piece of furniture that I design gives me as much satisfaction as the realization of an interior project."

#### BRETON AND POETIC

How Lemaire describes his own style? Short but powerful: "Original and timeless. That is also my 'design philosophy'. When I design a piece, it has to be both elegant and timeless and above all have a good quality. For that I play with architectural and radical lines that are sensual at the same time. The hardest thing about my job is that your designs have to be innovative over and over again, but you still have to stay true to your own style."

The fact that his style was inspired by his Breton origins is reflected in his designs, but don't forget his sources of inspiration, such as the furniture and decors of Jean Michel Franck, Jacques du Plantier, Le Corbusier and Gio Ponti. "They are the masters of re-

finement within a real simplicity, something that is also important in my designs," says Lemaire. 18th-century furniture also plays a major role in his designs. They often add a poetic touch to his scenographies.

Although Lemaire gets inspired by the interior style of the 18th century for his furniture designs and scenographies, his personal interior has a more vintage touch, complemented by his idiosyncratic signature. "The building in which I live dates from the 70s. I respected its style but designed contemporary furniture for it. I also have an armchair by Platner, a sculpture by Alexander Lieberman and a photo by Antonio Saura. The latter is my favourite piece in my house."

#### THE THIERRY LEMAIRE GALLERY

In 2017, Lemaire opened his own gallery on the Rue de Beaune in Paris, in the heart of the Rive Gauche, better known as the epicentre where antique dealers, contemporary art galleries and renowned architectural firms house together. There, he presents his

custom-made furniture combined with the work of various artists, such as the paintings of Béatrice Serre or the ceramics of Franck Aumont, two artists who he supports with conviction, especially since their work is in perfect harmony with his own creations.

The favourite design he designed himself, is also on display in the gallery. "The Koumac Armchair that I created is a very architectural and comfortable design. I really treated it like a sculpture." The geometric design, covered with sheepskin, is carried by a golden brass platform.

The series found in Lemaire's gallery are architectural with a strong and graphic line, all manufactured in France. And although he is passionate about furniture and architecture, he does not want to be limited in one way or another. "I would like to work on the interior of a boat. It contains so many limitations that require a lot of work in the field of conception and brainstorming, and that challenge appeals to me enormously. Who knows, maybe one day!"