



'ECLECTIC LUXURY'

IN PARIS AND BEYOND

Paris-based designer Stéphanie Coutas brings an eclectic, global outlook to design and décor. *By Tavia Robb*



Gazing upon any of the stunning spaces envisioned by interior designer and decorator Stéphanie Coutas, it's clear that her work reflects an innate sense of balance and a distinct awareness of the power of contrast – resulting in a heady combination of fascinating details and elegant simplicity.

Her new coffee table book, *Eclectic Luxury*, highlights her signature style, which she says is the result of a passionate collaboration with renowned artists and craftsmen with remarkable savoir-faire to create spaces that are wholly unique. Her contemporary, sophisticated take on luxury plays upon subtle contrasts between materials and refined textures.

Born in Paris, Coutas grew up in Asia. Her earliest memories are of vibrant indoor-outdoor living, glittering social get-togethers at home and the freedom of running

barefoot through a lush garden in Vietnam. The region's cultural emphasis on family has imprinted itself on Coutas, and she credits her mother's keen attention to detail and a sense of keeping spaces fresh with instilling in her an ever-present curiosity as well as a sunny outlook on life.

Frequent travels to the Middle East, England, Spain, Italy and Morocco spark a sense of freedom and creativity for Coutas, who seeks out artisans and craftspeople. Seeing these varying cultures, materials and techniques firsthand has profoundly influenced Coutas' perspective and her work, which displays a seemingly effortless harmony.

Architectural Digest France named Coutas to its AD 100 list for 2023. She and her international team at SC Edition Agency, based in Paris, have managed projects around the globe; whether designing

apartments, pieds-à-terre, penthouses, hotels, spas or restaurants, the team apply the same rigorous standards to every space. The Stéphanie Coutas Gallery in the city's 8th Arrondissement is perhaps a glimpse into the designer's keen mind and creative spirit: it holds a carefully curated selection of exceptional decorative pieces.

One dazzling example of Coutas' work, a home named *Iéna* – and the cover star of this publication – is an airy apartment on Paris' sought-after Right Bank. The clients, a French couple – both art collectors – enlisted Coutas to fully reimagine and renovate their space to perfectly balance their affinity for art with a comfortable yet cultivated aesthetic.

If "the future belongs to the curious," as some have said, then the future belongs to Stéphanie <https://www.digitalluxury.com/france>



BE DARING AND MIX PIECES — IF YOU LIKE THEM ENOUGH,
THEY WILL FIT.

STÉPHANIE COUTAS





LH How has technology changed your way of working?

SC The evolution of technical fibers has vastly expanded the field and inspired new ideas. For example, I use fabric threads with light inside them from St. Gobain to create wall panels, or a cotton/silk mix with lurex threads to elicit a very soft glow at night on curtains. The technology is especially interesting for carpets, particularly whites, which I love. Now, we have new fibers that can make highly durable yet refined white carpets that can withstand even a very humid and salty environment such as that on a yacht or in a bathroom, even outdoors. I am currently developing a collection of carpets with Tai Ping that utilizes this new fiber and am enthralled by the idea that a beautiful product that looks like a silk carpet can be used anywhere as intentional décor. There's something so satisfying about designing a new product that mixes beauty and efficiency. We're also seeing high interest in using copper,

brass, silver and metallic threads inside glass panels or combined with fabrics.

LH Are there tricks you could share with those who are drawn to developing their own eclectic style, to maintain a sense of self and voice without overcrowding their space?

SC I think true style is about reflecting a personality. A house should have the vibe of the person or family who live in it. My job is about finding the right balance between the people I am working for and my own inherent taste for sophistication, leading them to go a little further than they would have on their own. A stylish room usually creates harmony; whether it's bohemian chic or very dressy, it imparts a sense of calm and also creates astonishment. I would encourage people to not be afraid of empty spaces, to have few objects and furniture and instead only introduce pieces they truly enjoy looking at or touching. Also, pay attention to carpets, flooring and lighting. Be daring and mix pieces – if you like them enough, they will fit.



I LIKE TO KEEP A SENSE OF TRADITION COMBINED WITH THE COMFORTS OF THE 21ST CENTURY, LIVING IN A BOHEMIAN COUTURE AND ARTISTIC SPIRIT.

STÉPHANIE COUTAS





LII In the U.S., the whimsical Netflix series *Emily in Paris* has amplified perceptions of some of the city's most desirable aspects. What are some ways people can introduce Parisian design into their homes?

SC Parisian homes are marked by a certain elegance which originates from Haussmannian Architecture – the prominent architectural style of Paris – so maintaining the DNA of the buildings is very important. We always pay meticulous attention to the lighting in apartments, particularly

Parisian apartments, as their inherent structure offers grand volume and windows. As a home must be beautiful every moment of the day, the consideration of balancing natural and artificial light is critical. When working with Haussmannian buildings we like to preserve the crown moldings to maintain a French look while adding contemporary touches through textures and color palettes.

Overall, I like to keep a sense of tradition combined with the comforts of the 21st century, living in a bohemian couture

and artistic spirit. Warm and neutral color palettes work well to create a calm atmosphere when combined with both matte and shiny textures in the same tone. The joinery we use provides a cozy yet refined hotel vibe when paired with beautiful furniture. We always complete projects with luxurious materials such as bronze, marble, cashmere, and crystal from Baccarat. And another go-to for us is gypsum, to add curves and softness to spaces as well as matte brushed-marble stones, which seem to be trending now, to add a natural and sophisticated element.

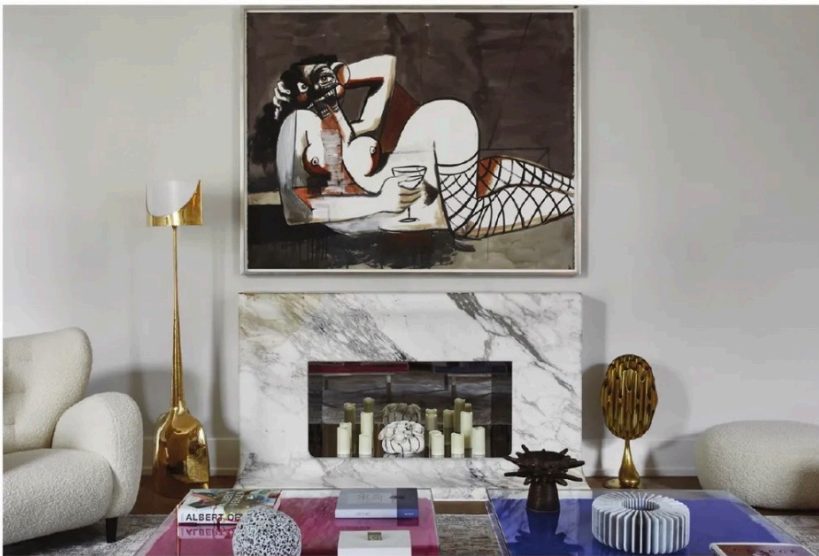


LH How has the growth of wellness – as a personal practice and a multi-trillion-dollar industry – influenced your designs, particularly projects that are not hotel/spa-related?

SC A balanced lifestyle is in our DNA. All my designs have a sense of well-being and comfort. In fact, if I were to describe our ethos in a single phrase, it would, without a doubt, be “good vibes!”

LH Looking at Iéna, specifically, the residence has a striking balance between its spaces and lines and light, and the works of art within. How did you navigate the owners’ perception of art with the emotion you were working to evoke in the space?

SC The clients wanted to create a space that would showcase their extensive collection of beautiful art while maintaining a cozy family home atmosphere. In other words, they wanted to create an apartment that blends the art of living and comfort. I wanted the home to evoke the feeling of a museum in order to emphasize the artwork but ensure that it was rich in soul. In this way, my inspiration for the design began from the personal aesthetic of the owner’s collection. I specifically chose to use a very soft and neutral color palette using only varying shades of white that ranged from matte to gloss, and light oak wood which was brushed in a way that makes it look very natural. I used a variety of different materials including plaster sculpture, wool and tactile fabrics. This provided a simple yet layered foundation to contrast and enhance the art that fills the space.





LH What led to the inclusion of the sculpted wall?

SC In the living room, the white wall is a relief sculpture of olive trees made from a combination of plaster and marble powder, which I developed from a design idea I had three years ago in collaboration with the sculptor, Lookas. I thought the relief sculpture would work excellently in this apartment as it is halfway between an artwork and a functional wall. Each wall in the apartment is different from the other, meaning that as the light changes within the apartment they are completely unique. This element of the design

creates a strong base, allowing for sophisticated furniture and décor to surround it.

LH What were the overarching criteria/themes for design decisions?

SC The overall mood created with this space is one of serenity, elegance and comfort. I believe that a house full of art is about showing off the works of art, but also feeling good when you're sitting down and simply enjoying it. This is where the neutral palette and soft textures really work, as they not only allow the pieces of art to stand out for themselves, but also encourage one to sit comfortably and reflect on the work before them. ■

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