

In the lounge of a Parisian apartment designed by the architect Charles Zana, an artwork by Tom Wesselmann hangs over a 1973 table and benches by Pierre Chapo, and a vintage Rolling Stones pinball machine. In the foreground is a 1950s table by Paul Frankl.

This Must Be the Place

The designer Charles Zana has created an eclectic, sophisticated Parisian home for a friend inspired by the shared soundtrack of their youth.

By Nancy Hass
Photographs by François Halard

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IN 1985, CHARLES Zana, then 25 and newly graduated from the architecture school at Paris's École des Beaux-Arts, knew what he had to do: move to Manhattan, where the city's post-punk scene was in its flamboyant final days.

Garbage swelled the gutters downtown, and a dense collage of graffiti and ragged posters seemed to cover almost every surface. Odessa, a Ukrainian diner on Avenue A frequented by artists and neighborhood characters, never closed on weekends. "It was just fantastic," Zana says. He was joined by three friends from high school,

including one who, like Zana, was raised on the outskirts of Paris. The two had become close over their love for American rock 'n' roll: Bob Dylan; Crosby, Stills & Nash; and Bruce Springsteen. This would be their season of freedom.

Once in New York, they ate at Katz's Deli and danced into the early morning at the Palladium nightclub on East 14th Street. At a book fair on Fifth Avenue, they chatted with the artist Keith Haring, one of their idols. "He enjoyed us," recalls the Tunisian-born Zana,

now 64. "We were two French boys who knew nothing and wanted to know everything." But what impressed them most were the monumental, beat-up cast-iron buildings of SoHo. Raw pipes stretched across the ceilings of the open lofts they could glimpse from the street through sooty windows; art galleries beckoned on the ground floors. "We were

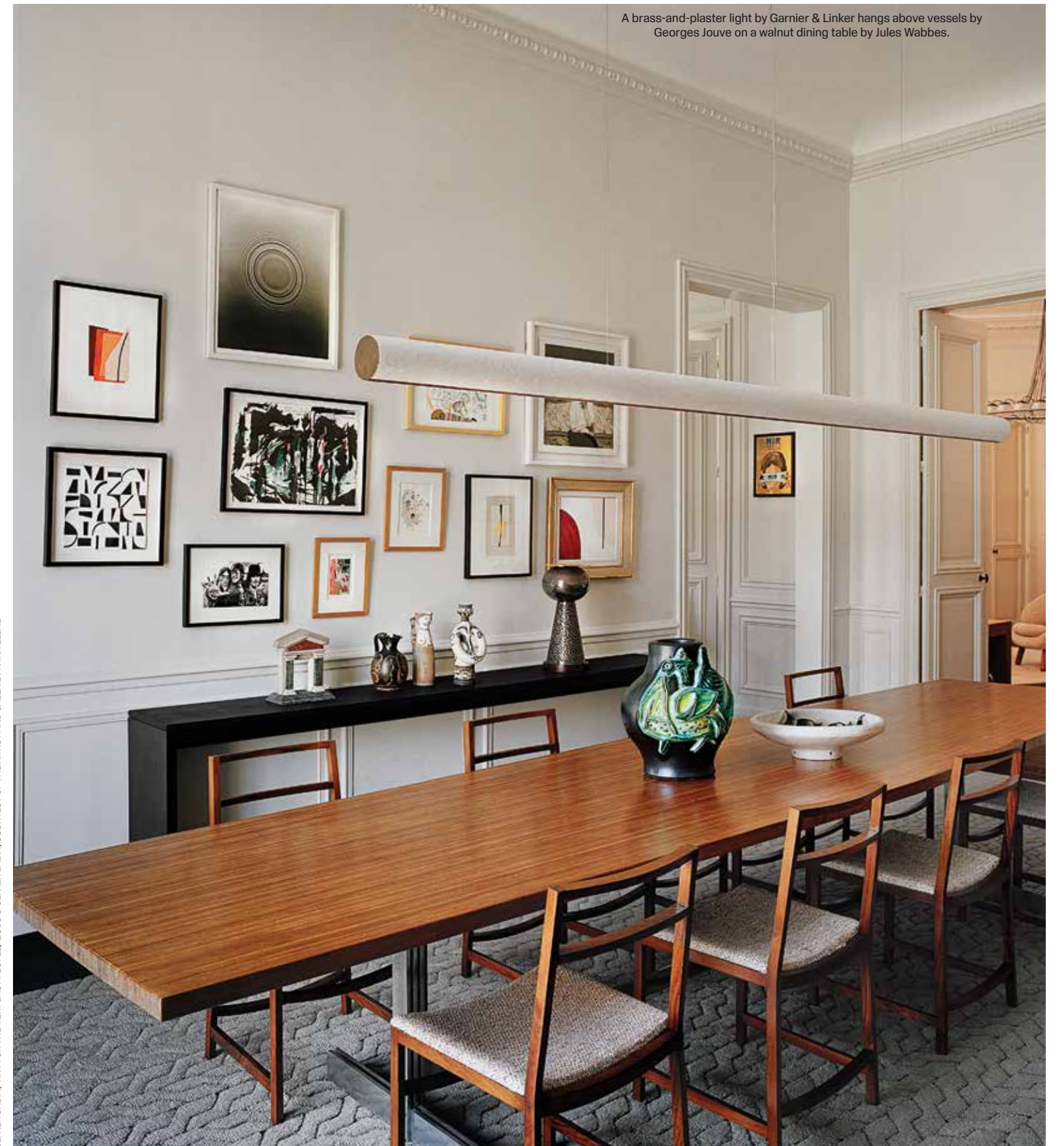
amazed by the proportions, the roughness of it all. You never saw that in Paris," Zana says. He soon realized he wanted to design interiors and furniture, rather than buildings — and to bring New York's industrial sparseness back home with him.

In the living room, a pair of sofas in Dedar mohair velvet, a coffee table by Vincenzo De Cotiis and a George Condo painting (far left). On the mantel, a painting by Gideon Rubin.



ARTWORK: ION CONSOLE, CENTER PABLO PICASSO ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NY; (ION CONSOLE, RIGHT) ETTORE SOTTASS, VESSEL, 1888 © 2024 BREDE ETTORRE SOTTASS/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NY; (ION CONSOLE, LEFT) GIDEON RUBIN, COURTESY OF ALON SEGEV, TEL AVIV, OPENING PAGE; ARTWORK (ION REAR WALL) TOM WESSELMANN, COURTESY OF TOM WESSELMANN/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NY; (ION REAR TABLE) OLIVIER BABIN, "ART FOR THE VERY LAST PEOPLE," 2005 © OLIVIER BABIN, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GALERIE FRANK ELBAZ

A brass-and-plaster light by Garnier & Linker hangs above vessels by Georges Jouve on a walnut dining table by Jules Wabbes.



After a year, Zana's friend returned to Paris to work in fashion, while Zana stayed for another year before moving back and opening his namesake design studio in 1990. But their stint in New York never left them. Over the next three decades, Zana has built a reputation for creating sparse but luxurious interiors arrayed with his custom Modernist-inspired furniture. He also realized a series of homes in London and Paris for his friend and his growing family

— each combining European grace and craftsmanship with the rock 'n' roll aesthetic of late 20th-century Lower Manhattan.

Their most recent collaboration is a five-bedroom apartment on the second floor of a grand 19th-century building on the Right Bank a block from the Seine. At once louche and crisply modern, the 2,150-square-foot space feels more like the natural result of a lifetime's accrual of objects than the work of a decorator. In fact, it's both these things: Since the '90s, Zana has helped his friend accumulate pieces of art and furniture that he then mixes with fresh works in each new home, creating a dialogue that spans the decades. Some designers wince when clients want to incorporate their existing furnishings into a project, but

these are the touchstones of the collaborators' common history. "They have meaning," Zana says.

To provide a graphic backdrop for this evolving collection — which ranges from black-and-white photographic portraits to midcentury furnishings to bespoke pieces by Zana — the apartment's walls and decorative moldings have been painted bright white, evoking a SoHo loft, and the original chevron floors in the living areas are stained matte black. The kitchen, just off the entry, is similarly monochromatic: midnight blue cabinetry and a gray-scale

terrazzo floor offset an organically shaped Lebanese cedar table by Zana. Down the hall in the primary bedroom, the white walls match the muted tones of a sheepskin-upholstered Pelican chair by the 20th-century Danish architect Finn Juhl and a bed by Zana with an overstuffed dove gray mohair velvet headboard known as the Teddy.

The formal living room also conveys a relaxed glamour. Zana upholstered a pair of structured sofas in green velvet, and on the floor is a pale textured wool-blend carpet from Manufacture Cogolin, the 100-year-old rug company near St.-Tropez. During the day, light streams in through tall windows, illuminating the gold mirrored surface of a cross-shaped coffee table by the Italian designer Vincenzo De Cotiis. A marble hearth is flanked

by a large abstract painting in stormy shades by the Los Angeles-based artist Sterling Ruby and a ghostly white oil painting by the New York artist George Condo. And against a wall, almost out of sight, is a low-slung rectangular granite bench by the conceptual artist Jenny Holzer engraved with an Elton John refrain: "Don't let the sun go down on me."

But music isn't the home's only influence. Zana collects works by the Italian designer Ettore Sottsass, mostly from the 1960s and '70s, before he founded the postmodern Memphis Group design collective in Milan

in 1980. While Zana's apartment, across the Seine in the Seventh Arrondissement, features three vibrant six-foot-tall Sottsass totems, he chose quieter pieces for his friend's home. Near the front door, juxtaposed with a boulder-size abstract bronze sculpture by the British American artist Thomas Houseago, is a compact brown-and-white vertically striped walnut veneer chest that Sottsass designed for the Italian manufacturer Poltronova in 1963, and nearby is one of several large 1990s-era marble-and-reed lamps by Andrea Branzi, who had been a Memphis member, with unbleached, crinkled rice-paper shades that fall like Victorian hooped skirts.

When they debuted, many Memphis works seemed too exuberant to play well with others. But here the relatively sedate works lend just enough eccentricity to enliven the otherwise moody aesthetic. Other artworks serve a similar purpose: A life-size painted bronze sculpture of a watermelon by the French artist Olivier Babin adds some humor to the lounge, with its geometric cork-topped coffee table stacked with books on the history of Capitol Records and the Beatles, its vintage Rolling Stones pinball machine and its large vinyl work by the Pop artist Tom Wesselmann depicting a red-lipped mouth exhaling plumes of cigarette smoke.

But it's the dining room, with its long, rectangular walnut table by the mid-20th-century Belgian designer Jules Wabbes, that best embodies Zana and his friend's shared tastes and many interests: Along one wall, a lacquered mahogany sideboard by the midcentury Italian designer Gio Ponti sits next to a 2000s-era multicolored tapestry-covered chair by the Brazilian designers Humberto and Fernando Campana. And on the opposite side of the room — below an assortment of art that includes a 1968 image by the British photographer Alan Messer of John Lennon and George Harrison at a party for the opening of their short-lived London clothing store Apple Tailoring — is an ebony console displaying a bulbous black metal vessel by Sottsass and anthropomorphic ceramic vases by Picasso, their painted faces turned up in wry amusement. "This apartment has the history of rock 'n' roll," says Zana. "But it's our version. It could only come from that particular past." ■

A bed upholstered in Pierre Frey mohair, Andrea Branzi lamps, a Pelican chair by Finn Juhl and a leather bench by Vincenzo De Cotiis.



In the kitchen, a 1960s ceiling lamp from Arredoluce hangs over a table designed by Zana.



OPPOSITE: ARTWORK (ON REAR WALL, CENTER) CHRISTIAN MARCLAY, "RING RING RING," 2006 © CHRISTIAN MARCLAY