

Men's Fashion  
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Sharp or louche, men's fashion that gets to have it both ways

# DOUBLE DUTY

# SOCIAL STUDIES

On Paris's Left Bank, an art-world architect transforms part of an 18th-century mansion into a sumptuous showroom and intimate social club.

By Zoey Poll  
Photographs by Anne-Claire Héraud

ON A FROSTY winter morning in Paris's Seventh Arrondissement, a white-feathered taxidermy swan gazes out from the window of Deyrolle on the Rue du Bac. One of the most famous shops in the upscale neighborhood — defined by its embassies, Haussmannian apartment buildings and French government ministries — Deyrolle, founded in 1831, sells birds, mammals and reptiles, all frozen in time and exhibited alongside cases of beetles and butterflies.

Through the courtyard, in an adjoining wing partly occupied by what was Deyrolle's taxidermy and printing workshop until the mid-20th century, is the latest project from the Argentine architect Luis Laplace, 56, and his business and life partner, the Toulouse, France, native Christophe Comoy, 54. The newly renovated two-story, 2,500-square-foot property takes after another 19th-century anachronism: the *appartement de réception*, a space that exists solely for the purpose of receiving, entertaining and impressing guests. Here, in the absence of bedrooms, is a series of meticulously designed sitting areas that combine the formality of a showroom with the layered, lived-in feeling of a home.

Since founding their Paris-based architectural studio, Laplace, in 2004, the duo have become known for their work in and around the contemporary art world, including the design of the gallery Hauser & Wirth's sprawling outpost near the Champs-Élysées and the Paris homes of the American photographer Cindy Sherman and the French gallerist Emmanuel Perrotin. In 2023, they completed a comprehensive renovation of their own apartment, where they've lived for nearly two decades, in an ornate Haussmannian building overlooking the tree-ringed Place Saint-Georges in the Ninth Arrondissement, as well as their 60-person studio a few floors below.

Around the same time, the couple began daydreaming about another creative refuge, inspired by the furnished art-viewing rooms that they often install inside galleries. They were drawn to the idea of an inviting space at a scale large enough to allow them to exhibit their own collection of art and design objects, as well as host meetings with clients, friends and collaborators. Like much else in their life, they wanted the new place to be both personal and professional. "A space where we show how we live only works if we use it; if it's real," says Laplace.

THE UNUSUAL LEFT Bank pied-à-terre initially caught Comoy's attention. "It always starts with Christophe. And I'm always suspicious and say no," says

In the lounge next to the cocktail bar of Laplace's new showroom and entertaining space on the Rue du Bac in Paris, a 1975 steel-and-plexiglass pendant by Michel Boyer, a pair of 1940s beechwood armchairs by Studio B.B.P.R., a 1960s glazed vase by the French ceramist André Baud and a lava stone coffee table and translucent Corian floor lamp, both by Laplace.

Laplace, who eventually let himself be persuaded, in large part because of his partner's fascination with the history of the building: It had originally formed part of a vast *hôtel particulier* that was erected in 1744 to serve as the home of Samuel-Jacques Bernard, the eldest son of the private banker Samuel Bernard, whose considerable wealth (derived in part from his involvement in the international slave trade) and extensive financial networks underwrote much of the Louis XIV monarchy.

In the intervening years, many of the space's 18th-century details had been lost, acquired by collectors or concealed. Over an 18-month renovation, Laplace and Comoy stripped out the linoleum floors left by the previous tenants, who had used the space as an office, and raised the ceilings from 10 feet to their original extravagant 13 feet, adding hand-forged,

gilded espagnolette latches to the windows. "We brought the space back to life with details that had been absent for so long," says Comoy, standing in the entryway on the parquet de Versailles that they sourced in part from a chateau in Lorraine and had installed in such a way that its geometric wooden lattices would creak softly underfoot. "Today people would normally glue it because they hate that it makes noise," adds Laplace, pressing his foot against the floorboards. "But I need to feel that it's old."

Paintings, sculptures and ceramics from the couple's own collection are

exhibited alongside other pieces on loan. Inside the front door, an unruly 2006 sculpture by the American artist Jason Rhoades dangles like a chandelier, trailing looping cords above the lofty salon, the first in a trio of spacious sitting areas that unfold across the length of the second floor. Much of the work was created by friends of the couple,

including the American visual artist Roni Horn, whose photographs of taxidermy Icelandic wildfowl fill the grand interior stairwell around the corner from a textile pendant light designed by Laplace and made in collaboration with the Japanese artist Takesada Matsutani, who stained its sheer linen canvas panels with inky brushstrokes. Nearby is a

Below: in the office, a 1951 enameled ceramic-and-lacquered metal wall lamp by Georges Jouve, a 1930s armchair by the Italian architect Marcello Piacentini, a 1970s fiberglass side table by Douglas Deeds and paintings by Philip Guston. Right: in the kitchen, a 1960s enameled ceramic table lamp by Les 2 Potiers alongside 18th-century glass lamps and lace-maker's loupes.





In the dining room, a tinted handblown glass-and-patinated brass chandelier and a marble-and-varnished oak dining table, both by Laplace, a dozen 1970s carved oak chairs by Francesco Pasinato, a 1960s glazed ceramic planter by Mado Jolain and “No Footprint” (2024), an acrylic and acrylic gel painting on canvas by the artist Frank Bowling.

silvery, thronelike beveled armchair by the designer Rick Owens and an electric blue silicone bust with a phallus in its eye socket by the Los Angeles-based artist Paul McCarthy. “We wanted it to feel less academic and more challenging,” Laplace says. “I like to provoke.”

As in a gallery, there’s always something new to see. On Sundays, Laplace, who began collecting as a child — he proudly displayed American soda cans and German beer bottles in his childhood bedroom in Buenos Aires — goes shopping at flea markets around Paris for himself and his clients. Late at night, the couple will often walk the two miles from the Rue du Bac to their home and studio on Place Saint-Georges, pausing on the Rue de Lille or Rue de l’Université to take photos of the vintage furniture illuminated in boutique windows. One recent acquisition — found at a Sotheby’s auction last October — was a pair of Art Deco floor lamps once owned by Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé that Laplace and Comoy

had coveted for years: the fluted maple columns, topped by tulip-like ceramic vessels, cast soft light onto the wood-paneled walls of the lounge at the rear of the second floor.

At least once a week, when the couple isn’t traveling, Comoy can be found there reading, while Laplace occupies the luminous central salon one room over, where he goes to think or draw. On the ground floor, between an ocher-walled office and a large kitchen, the dining room can seat a dozen guests around its deep green marble table lined with a set of 1970s-era Italian chairs. In the evenings, everyone tends to orbit the cocktail bar upstairs, which is sheathed in glittering ribbed metal. It’s not uncommon for the couple to have to politely kick out their guests late at night. Still, they prefer hosting friends to going out. “Our personalities are rather quiet. We like to entertain with real interactions, with good food and good drinking,” says Laplace. “We’re indoors kind of people.” ▣

## MARKET REPORT

# MEN'S SANDALS

Manolo Blahnik, \$1,095.



Bottega Veneta, price on request.



Allen Edmonds, \$250.



John Lobb, \$1,500.



Santoni, \$890.



Dior, \$1,150.



Hermès, \$1,250.



Fisherman styles and slides — whether neutral or bold — remain a spring staple.