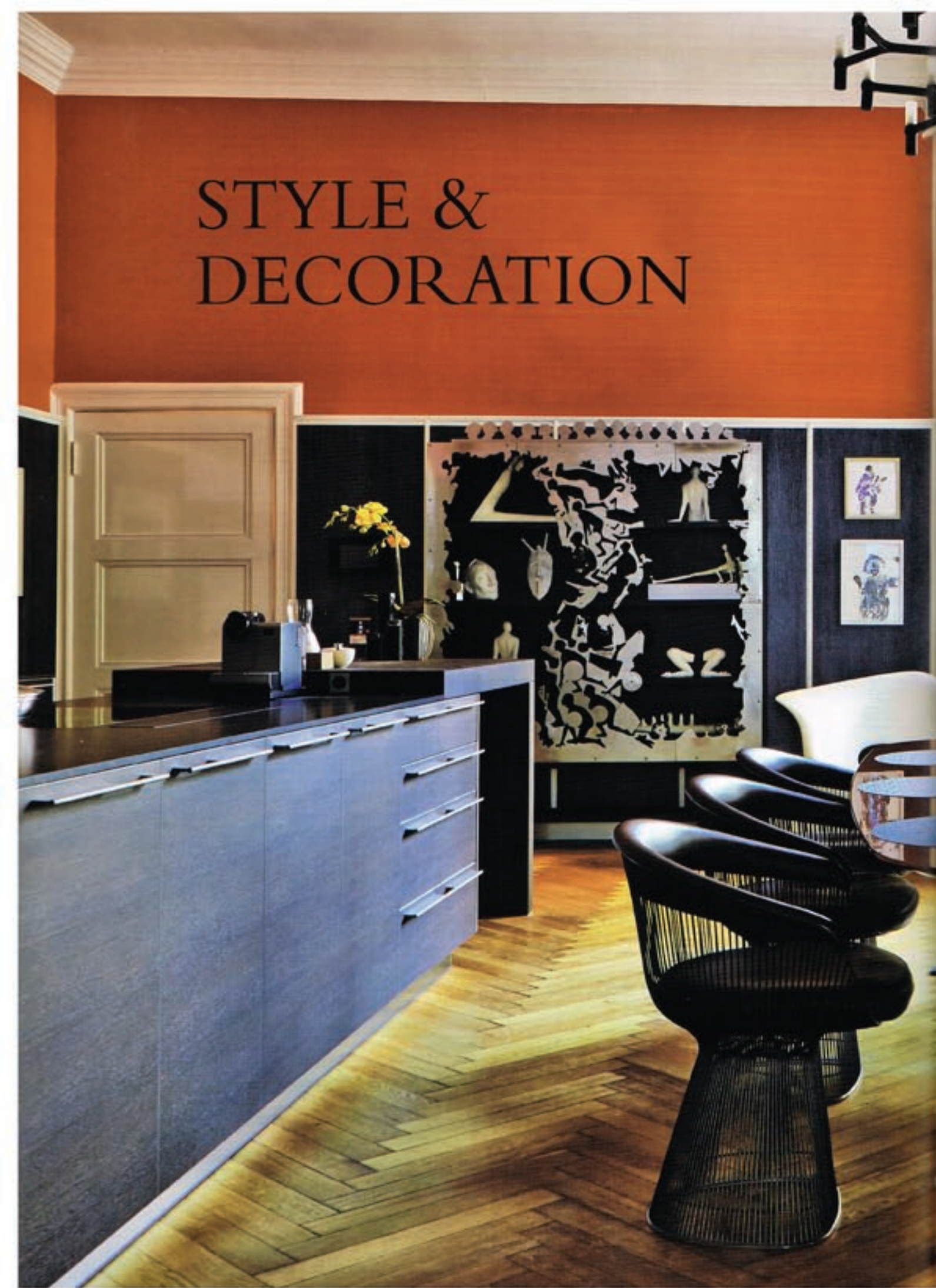


STYLE & DECORATION





THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE
LEFT Mamuka Bliadze was initially resistant to the idea of a strong colour for the walls, but once converted he embraced it fully and chose the Archibald colour 'Saxon Green' in the study, seen here from the entrance hall, as an ideal background for a pair of paintings by Bruce McLean. Painted 'Dix Blue', the entrance hall also contains important artworks including a large one by Matthias Weischer and a sculpture by Tony Cragg.



ART HOUSE

Walk through the front door of Mamuka Bliadze's first-floor Berlin apartment and you step into a world of colour. The walls are blue, the armchairs are fuchsia, the cushions are turquoise. Through arched double doors to the left, the kitchen is a vibrant terracotta, while a doorway ahead frames a view of green walls, an orange chair, a purple cushion, mustard-yellow sideboard, and, hanging above it, an oil painting by Bruce McLean in neon tangerine, azure, and lime.

ABOVE RIGHT The entrance hall once housed the main staircase before the building was divided into separate apartments and is big enough to feel like a room in its own right, with a wall of bookshelves opposite a monumental new fireplace in polished concrete. The oil painting, vibrant and unframed on its background of 'Dix Blue', is by Georgian artist Natela Iankoshvili.



ABOVE AND RIGHT There are two grandly proportioned reception rooms. This one overlooks the street, and in summer its view of the houses opposite is veiled by the canopy of trees that lines the pavement. The fluid colour of the light-dappled leaves is reflected inside by walls of gentle 'Saxon Green', against which Bruce McLean's painted flowers and foliage pulsate with neon. Back-to-back desks shelter beneath a Triennale lamp by Arredoluce.

Mamuka Bliadze is a dealer in contemporary art, and lives above the gallery he runs with partners Alfred Kornfeld and Anne Langmann, surrounded by the paintings, sculptures, and photographs he loves, collects, buys, and sells. When he first viewed the apartment with interior architects Gisbert Pöppler and Rüdiger Sander, his impression was not immediately favourable. 'It seemed very dark,' he grimaces. 'It was being used as office space and a lecture hall for a publisher. They had painted it all white, but the effect was somehow murky. Instead of making the rooms feel bright, the white paint emphasized the lack of natural light.'

What the apartment lacked in sunlight, it made up for in architectural stature. In a quiet road in central Berlin, the building dates from 1892 and was designed by architect Wilhelm Martens as a studio and home for himself. These first-floor rooms were the main reception rooms and have soaring ceilings, tall doors, and big windows. However, at both the front

and the back, the windows are shaded by mature trees. Add to this the depth of the building, which is part of a terrace, and it is inevitable that the gracious, elegant interiors are a little deprived of natural light.

Rüdiger, who took charge of the project, knew that the solution was to use colour, and the best artificial lighting, to warm the spaces and dispel any trace of gloom. Mamuka, however, was initially concerned that his paintings would not look at their best against coloured backgrounds. Plain white walls remain the accepted, acceptable choice for displaying contemporary artworks, a rule adhered to by

most galleries and museums. The bold, enveloping colour that Rüdiger prescribed to transform the rooms from gloom to glory was a departure about which Mamuka was initially cautious.

Fortunately, Mamuka is adventurous and visually confident – he has, after all, helped to propel to fame and fortune several artists from his native Georgia, including Tamara Kvesitadze who represented her country in the 2007 Venice Biennale. He is also a man who is prepared to listen to expert advice, so when Rüdiger suggested 'Charlotte's Locks', one of the most punchy colours in the Farrow & Ball range, for the kitchen and dining room, Mamuka agreed.



THIS PICTURE Shelving in 'All White' can be pulled across to divide the 'Saxon Green' study from the living room, the walls of which are a more sober 'Hardwick White'. Although the decoration of this second reception room is less colourful, the two rooms feel balanced due to the expanse of bright red upholstery and the midnight blue of the rug by Jan Kath. The painting above the chair is by Neo Rauch, while the one propped against the shelves is by Tamara Kvesitadze.





'Dix Blue' was chosen for the hall. 'Hardwick White' for the drawing room, and Bliadze himself, by this stage a convert to the power of bold backgrounds, suggested 'Saxon Green' for the study, in which he planned to hang his prized pair of paintings by Bruce McLean. The effect of these paintings, which pulse with colour like an exotic, Impressionist jungle, and the enveloping greenery of the walls give the room a fresh, outdoor feel.

In the hall, where a large, lush landscape featuring a caravan by Matthias Weischer hangs opposite the front door, the blue of the wall that surrounds it picks up on the colour of the sky and makes the room feel bright and summery. More colour magic has been woven in the cloakroom and shower, which are slotted into an awkward space off the hall, where the sandy brown tones of 'India Yellow' are transformed to bright buttercup thanks to their juxtaposition with shiny black mosaic tiling.

The bedroom has a more subdued colour scheme, although Rüdiger has again exploited the power of paint by using the darker 'Brassica' above dado level and 'Wimborne White' beneath, in order to make this small, square room with its high ceiling seem broader and less tall. 'Wimborne White' has also been used in the adjacent bathroom, which is lined



OPPOSITE Two sombre paintings by Anselm Kiefer hang in this room, their monochrome palette quietly complemented by the soft grey of the 'Hardwick White' walls. Behind the tousled chair by Franco Albini, a sculpture of a man by Tamara Kvesitadze tiptoes on butterflies towards the open door of the kitchen.

TOP To spread the visual weight of the Bulthaup kitchen units, the lower walls were panelled in blackened oak below the exuberant orange of 'Charlotte's Locks'. The Pathos table is by Antonio Citterio, the chairs by Warren Platner, and the 'cupboard' on the far wall is actually a delicate artwork by Tamara Kvesitadze.

ABOVE Looking across the living room from the entrance hall, a slice of another Anselm Kiefer painting is visible on the far wall. The sculpture behind the Eames lounge is a maquette for a larger piece by Tamara Kvesitadze.



with striking *striato nero* marble in bold stripes of black and white. 'We especially chose the marble to have as little yellow coloration as possible, which is very hard to find,' Rüdiger explains. 'The 'Wimborne White' has a warm tinge, which helped to make the marble look even whiter.'

Furnished with 20th- and 21st-century classics such as the Pathos dining table by Antonio Citterio, dining chairs by Warren Platner, a B&B Italia sofa, a coffee table by Charlotte Perriand, and rugs by Jan Kath, the apartment has immense aesthetic panache. But despite all this visual bounty, it is the art that most insistently draws the gaze, whether a neon light installation in the kitchen by Brigitte Cowan, a sinuous white sculpture of a man tiptoeing on butterflies by Tamara Kvesitadze, a desolate landscape encrusted with twigs by Anselm Kiefer, or a small, enigmatic oil by Neo Rauch. All demand attention and examination.

'The colour of these rooms makes me happy,' Mamuka grins. 'The paint is very subtle, very diverse; it changes according to the light.' He has even commissioned an in-situ artwork using Farrow & Ball paint, such is his faith in it. Inspired by their work in a Berlin restaurant, Mamuka asked artists Denis Vidinski and Patrick Voigt, known as 22quadrat, to produce something similar in the corner of his kitchen, using 'All White' Estate Emulsion on top of the background colour 'Charlotte's Locks'. The result is a series of broad, textured brush strokes that descend raggedly from the cornice and terminate in thin drizzles of paint as if abandoned by some particularly slapdash, if creative, decorator. Yet another work of art shown off to advantage.

ABOVE The bedroom at the back of the apartment is small, particularly in relation to its ceiling height. By painting the walls in warm but receding 'Brassica' above the dado level, the space is optically expanded. The large-scale design of the Dedar curtains also helps to make the room seem bigger.

RIGHT Seen next to a bright white, earthy 'India Yellow' looks more tan than buttercup, but in this small, slick shower room, where it sits side by side with glossy black mosaic tiling and marble, it takes on a rich, golden glow.



THIS PAGE Opening from the main bedroom is this ultra-glamorous bathroom, lined in two types of dramatically striped Italian marble, superbly matched and chosen with as little yellow in the stone as possible. The subtle warmth of 'Wimborne White' on the walls helps to make the marble seem whiter still. The column heaters are from Tubes Radiators.