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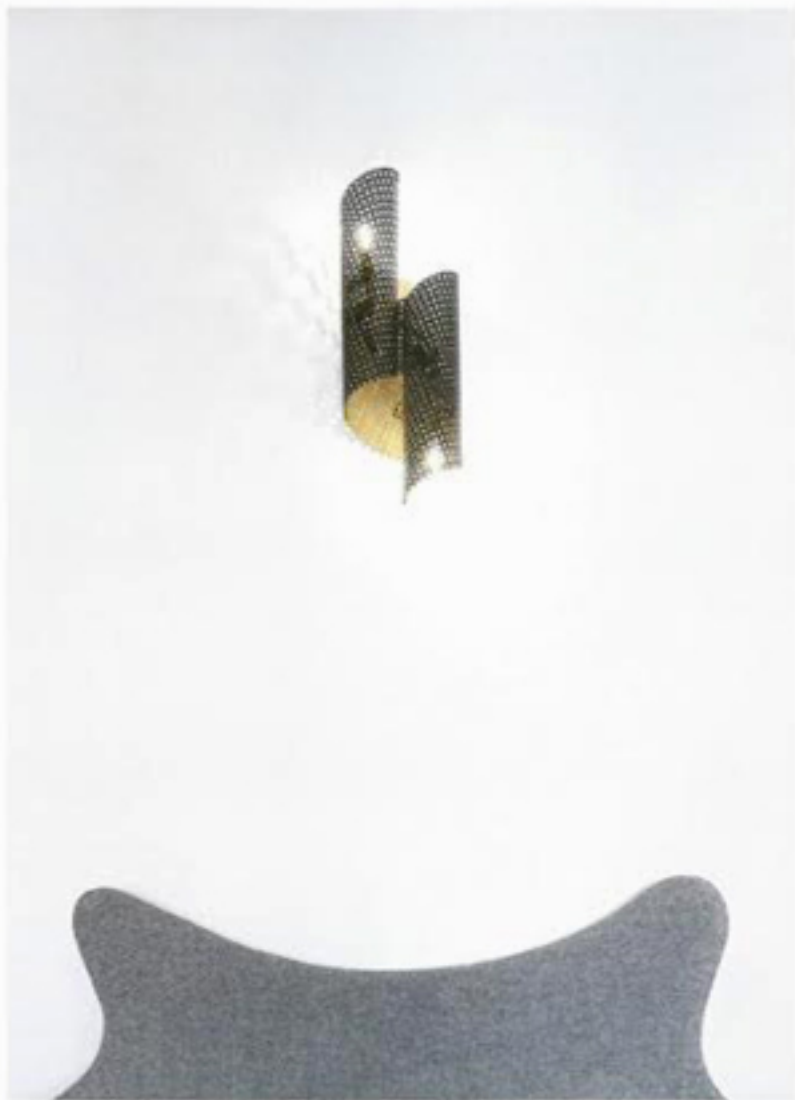
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# JEWELLERY BOX

Vincent Darré's new salon design for Elie Top turns a Paris townhouse into a fantasy setting for private liaisons

PHOTOGRAPHY: FABRICE FOUILLET WRITER: CARAGH MCKAY

The first thing you do when you step into Elie Top's jewellery salon is stop. Then look down. As you slowly sink into the pile carpet, the black ET monogram, woven into a blue, pearl and grey abstract sunburst, beckons the eye further. Conceived by designer Vincent Darré and his assistant, Marine Prud'hon, the carpet is designed as a labyrinth, weaving a secret path through the rooms. There is a sense of stepping into the past here, but it is

quickly countered by Darré's minimalist, modern opulence. 'When you walk in, what you are feeling is the culture of Elie,' says Darré, the former fashion creative turned interior designer. 'We needed to create something new, but not banal nor aggressive. And as the salon is a little place and jewellery is small, it's impossible to have baroque décor.'

The 1930s frosted-glass doors with aquatic motifs, that open onto the showroom, were

acquired by the jewellery designer from an antiques dealer in France. 'These doors were the starting point for us to search for display cases from other times and to find similar ways of illuminating rooms with the diffused light they create,' says Darré.

Top has known Darré for years and trusts his judgement. So when, last year, the Larvin accessories director launched an eponymous fine jewellery line, he asked Darré to join »

ELIE TOP IN THE MAISON'S  
FIRST SALON, WHERE  
A 1935 ETTORRE SOTTsass  
CHANDELIER PINPOINTS  
JEWELS IN A GLASS  
VITRINE BUILT INTO THE  
LACQUERED ANTHRACITE-  
TOP TABLE BY MAISON  
DARRÉ. THE CUSTOM-MADE  
CARPET REFLECTS TOP'S  
HOUSE LOGO.

OPPOSITE, TOP'S OFFICE,  
WITH A 1950S LAMP  
BY MATHEU MATEGOT  
FROM GALERIE VINCENNE  
AND A SOFA BY MAISON  
DARRÉ IN KVADRAT TWEED





him in scouring Paris for a salon space, and to design it for him.

Top was immediately won over by the rue Saint-Honoré townhouse that is now home to the salon. At first, Darré was not convinced. 'I wanted an apartment with very high walls but Elie pointed out that it wouldn't be right for the jewels, which are very small objects.'

Darré also liked the challenge of pulling back a little. 'I did not want to impose my strong tastes on the project. The design had to capture the mood of Elie's jewellery. We wanted it to be as though you are walking into a jewellery box,' he says. In fact, the actual Elie Top box was the reference point for the salon design. 'I looked at the box. It is grey and the logo is black with an octagonal outline, so I started with that,' says Darré.

He then changed the proportions of the apartment. 'Vincent took away the bay windows,' says Top. 'He made the room octagonal, and closed up the windows and the doors.' Top was, at first, 'a little shocked at the idea of blocking out the light'. But



TOP, THE 1930s FROSTED GLASS DOORS AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE SHOWROOM INSPIRED DARRÉ'S DESIGN  
ABOVE, THE MONOCHROMED CARPET AT THE SALON ENTRANCE

then Darré's plan to bring diffused light into the space appealed.

Three bespoke carpets, including the one in the entrance, line the floors of three interconnecting salons. The one in the first has a slightly altered colour scheme, a gradation of glacier blue with two shades of grey; in the second salon, the carpet echoes the taupe and moss-green window screens made by Lilo Grumbach Marquand, blind and screen designer extraordinaire, who was assistant to Coco Chanel in the 1930s.

The approach, say Top and Darré, could be seen as reflective of the vision of Jean-Michel Frank, the 1930s French interior designer famed for his decadent minimalist style, combining exquisite fabrics in opposing textures with contemporary furniture and antique pieces.

The opulent art direction of Marcel L'Herbier's science fiction film of 1914, *L'Inhumain*, is also a favourite reference of the pair. 'Entire sets of that film were created using objects made by leading artisans and designers of the time,' says Darré.

The maison's first salon is centred by a custom-made lacquered and mirrored octagonal anthracite table. The chairs that surround it are 1940s flea-market finds that have been lacquered and covered in the same grey-pearl Lelièvre velvet as a bench that lines the walls. At first, it seems invisible, but it quietly accents the proportions of the room.

Frosted glass panels skim the height of the walls. In the first salon, there is a series representing the signs of the zodiac; in the second, glass etchings of a starry sky line the top of the display cases.

Two 1960s wall lamps are situated at the entrance, while a 1970s Erno Sottsass chandelier illuminates the first salon. 'We needed something *scholarly* in the main salon. We wanted to pinpoint the light, displaying the jewellery as though it were part of an experiment,' says Darré. The second salon features a 1930s Silesno ceiling light, from Deposito A. The 1950s pierced black metal wall lamps in Top's office - which houses an Aldo Tura table in lacquered parchment and Kvadrat grey tweed seating by Maison Darré - were acquired from Galerie Vingtrème.

'We have tried to make the salon feel like a special moment in time because, for me, the secret to luxury is to give time,' says Top. 'When a woman comes here, I want her to spend as much time as she likes, as though she is in a little apartment.'

The catholic mix of eras, influences and textures evoke a feeling of timelessness - the salon could have been there forever. It was just the mood that Top and Darré envisioned. 'We wanted to go back to the traditional way of buying precious jewellery, when people liked to buy jewels in secret, with jewellers they knew, behind closed doors,' says Top. 'We live in an epoch where everything is a label. I wanted to reverse that.'

See Elie Top's fine jewellery at [Wallpaper.com](http://Wallpaper.com) ★