

MARCH 2013 £4.80

THE WORLD OF INTERIORS

LONDON
DESIGN WEEK:
The New Fabrics,
Furniture, Fittings



THE MODERNIST BOTANISTS:
Putting Down Roots on Mexico's Paradise Plateau



This page: the shopfront showcases some of the designer's work - a 'Waxing Gibbous' mirror (reflecting the barber's shop across the road), a 'Ball' vase and several light fittings, including 'Captured' for Lobsenz (left). Opposite: the front door's bespoke handle is by Michael Anastassiades for Studio Mumbai



MY PERSONAL WATERLOO

With picture windows overlooking a mainline train station and the London Eye, the home-cum-showroom of Michael Anastassiades offers a polished, minimalist contrast to the scruffy streets outside. Conceived around a mahogany parquet floor salvaged from nearby County Hall, the scheme showcases the chandeliers, pendants and lamps that have made this lighting designer so sought-after. Text: Matt Gibberd. Photography: Annabel Elston





A 'Mirror' chair by Michael Anastassiades faces out from the kitchen, with an Eames lounge chair and ottoman in the background. The 'Tube' chandelier above the radiator is one of the resident's most successful pieces



THE LONDON home of Michael Anastassiades is like a coruscating jewellery box floating in a river of gubbins. Located on a scruffy street in Waterloo, flanked by a pub on one side and a betting shop on the other, it is the unlikelyst of settings for one of London's most discriminating product designers. But Anastassiades has lived in this building for 15 years now; like many young creatives trying to find their way in the city, he grabbed some space where he could afford it. With the opening of his new showroom on the ground floor, only now has he drawn back the curtains and declared his punctilious presence.

'I did it up in stages,' he tells me. 'When I arrived there was nothing original worth keeping so I decided to gut it, reset the floor levels and make it completely modern. Six years later I added an extension, and now I have built a new level on top and created the shop.' In conjunction with the Belgian architect Wim de Mul, he has fashioned large volumes from humble beginnings.

The building's frontage has a distinguishing off-black livery. In the window, a circular mirror seems to melt into the ground like a Waterloo sunset, reflecting a striking gold-plated vase in the shape of a bowling ball. Negotiating my way in proves a bit of a challenge – the formidable full-height door is minimally furnished with a folded bronze handle. Feeling my way around like a white-gloved mime artist, I manage to locate the doorbell.

Once inside, it becomes apparent that the building's window display serves a dual purpose: the base of it is glazed, allowing light to penetrate the guest bedroom in the basement. Above this is the newly created showroom,

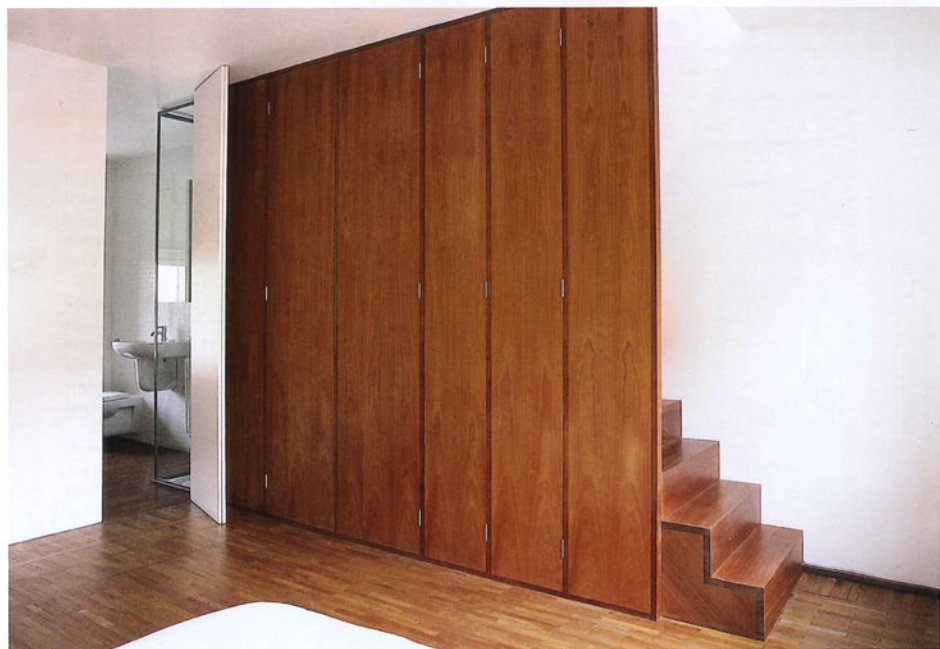
containing a fluid arrangement of objects and lights designed by Anastassiades. There are two more of those 'melting' mirrors, one butted up against the ceiling and the other spreading out across the floor; a set of meditation stools in statuary white marble; and some of his impeccable 'Mobile' chandeliers, Calder-inspired constructions that hang in midair with balletic poise. Anastassiades shows me one of his newest creations, an exquisite floor lamp designed for the Austrian crystal company Lobmeyr – at the heart of the piece is a cut-crystal globe that casts a shadow on the wall in the shape of an eye. When I ask him how long it took to perfect such a trick, his smile tells a story of countless tests and revisions.

Anastassiades trained as a civil engineer and industrial designer, and his products display a scientific attention to detail. To the rear of the showroom is his studio, which is entered via a door clad in sheet brass like the wrapper on a chocolate. Here he and his small team construct models and prototypes, and the shelves are piled high with reference books and samples.

'We do everything here, from design to fabrication to sales,' he explains. He established his eponymous practice back in 1994, producing limited editions in small batches, and earning a name for himself as a lighting designer in particular. In 2007 he decided to increase the availability of his pieces, so he sourced a range of family-run workshops around the world to make their various elements. The products are assembled in Birmingham, and Anastassiades personally inspects every one before it is sent to the customer.

Above left: in the living quarters, a 'Mobile' chandelier by Michael Anastassiades hangs over his 'Faceted' table. Above right: in the sitting room one of his copper mirrors is mounted above a 'Jules' sofa from George Smith. The 'Tree in the Moonlight' table light is also by the owner, while the lingams on the floor are sacred stones from India. Opposite: Anastassiades designed the brass knobs on these cabinets





Top: the third floor has sliding windows giving on to a deck for enjoying the view of Waterloo station and the London Eye. It is minimally furnished with an 'Addition' sofa and bench by Kaare Klint, a three-legged milking stool and a 1980s 'Super' lamp by Martine Bedin for Memphis. Above: the designer's bedroom and bathroom are deliberately pared down and free of decoration. Opposite: the reverse view





Ascending the stairs to his living quarters on the first floor, I am met by an architectural 'Faceted' table in solid walnut and a mirror made from copper. Another of these hangs above a George Smith sofa in the sitting room at the rear, which is contained within the extension and leads onto a little terrace. His mirrors are the only form of surface decoration that Anastassiades allows himself – there are no pictures on the walls, which are universally painted white. He has, however, shelled out for some egg-shaped lingam stones, which are arranged in small clusters on the floor. These have been chosen for their sculptural qualities, but also hint at a certain spirituality; considered sacred by the Indians, they are found only in the Narmada river, a tributary of the Ganges.

Between the study area and the sitting room is the kitchen, with units that were handmade by Anastassiades and his joiner, Ben Legg. These are mahogany to match the floor, which was the starting point for the whole scheme. 'When I first moved in, the County Hall up the road was being renovated,' Anastassiades explains. 'They saw the scaffolding on the front of my house and asked me if I wanted some parquet flooring, so I said yes.' One day, great bag-loads of it arrived on his doorstep, covered in dust and tar. He decided to slice the pieces in half before laying them end to end in a linear pattern; he shows me the bits he laid himself, where the lines are endearingly wobbly. 'Nothing in this house is bought,' he says. 'I use my living environment to discover things.' The brass knobs on the cupboards, for example, were designed by Anastassiades because he couldn't find any he liked.

His most iconic light fitting, the ecclesiastically elegant 'Tube' chandelier, overhangs the staircase to the bedroom on the second floor, where Anastassiades sleeps in suitably pared-down surroundings. A grille has been cut out of the ceiling, inspired by something he saw at Sir John Soane's Museum; it hints at an undiscovered space at the top of the house. This room is his personal refuge. On one side is a timber screen designed by Wim de Mul and made by Ben Legg, which acts as a shutter for the windows onto the street. It also provides a visual counterpoint to the other side of the space, which is almost entirely transparent, with windows that slide back to reveal an urban vista of queuing black taxis, railway tracks and the London Eye.

This visual cement mixer seems an incongruous setting for a man who used to teach yoga, but Anastassiades enjoys being in the thick of it all. 'I like the movement and excitement,' he tells me. 'I am right on the bend of the river here, so I can cross any bridge and be in a different part of town: St James's Park or Covent Garden or the City.'

It also makes it easy for clients to seek him out; he has been inviting them here for years, and the new shop space is a logical extension of this. Admirers cannot fail to be excited by seeing his work in its natural environment. 'Most of my products have been inspired by the house,' he explains. 'I have designed things for myself as I have needed them.' Indeed, this place is not just a home – it is the carefully curated portfolio of a designer at the top of his game. ■
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Top left: paddle stairs lead down to the guest quarters in the basement. Top right: the showroom contains a 'Waxing Gibbous' and a 'Last Quarter' mirror, which are inspired by the phases of the moon. There is also a 'Mobile' chandelier and some meditation stools in statuary white marble. The window overlooks the staircase to the basement. Opposite: the door to the studio is sheathed in brass

