



I am obsessed with order and discipline,' Michael Anastassiades explains. 'And nothing is straight in this house. It's a curse to live with – but we tamed it quite well.' The Cypriot designer, who came to London from Nicosia to study in 1988, is discussing the Victorian house on a popular market street in Waterloo, London, that he bought 15 years ago.

But taming it does not begin to describe the work that Anastassiades undertook to transform the home into what it is today. Bit by bit the five-storey merchant's home, with a shop on the ground floor and living quarters above, has been completely reimagined, reordered and expanded into a 21st-century version of a live-work space.

Understatement is one of Anastassiades' signature characteristics. He is best known for one-off and limited-edition lights – quiet and considered pieces that do not overwhelm one with details beyond the simple geometric forms that make up his visual language. He speaks earnestly of being in search of the 'pure essence' of a product.

To describe Anastassiades' work is to give an impression of the man himself. He makes meticulously thought-out and functional pieces, unsurprising when you consider that he studied civil engineering at Imperial College before going to the Royal College of Art for a master's in design. His products are composed and balanced, qualities shared by Anastassiades, who has practised yoga for more than 20 years and taught classes in his home until four years ago. Made from metals, wood, stone and opalescent glass, his creations are reductive without suffering from the

A CUT ABOVE

A former merchant's house over a butcher's shop has been sliced, diced and filleted by the designer Michael Anastassiades. By **David Nicholls**. Photographs by **Philip Sinden**

The first floor The open-plan living space is divided into quadrants. At the far end are a living room and a terrace – just big enough for a bench and a potted silver birch. A supporting wall divides the kitchen, which Michael Anastassiades had made from mahogany to match the reclaimed floors, and the staircase. The green sofa is a Jules by George Smith (georgesmith.co.uk). The leather chair is an Eames lounger (1956), designed by Ray and Charles Eames and produced by Vitra (available from conranshop.co.uk). Groups of large stones appear throughout.



Above left a view from the living room to a relatively austere dining area, and a good example of how Anastassiades' String lights for Flos work in the space. The Faceted table in walnut is one of a limited edition of 13 that Anastassiades designed in 2009. Stairs lead to the master bedroom, which overlooks the living room. The reclaimed parquet floors were originally in a herringbone pattern; each piece was cut in half and reset in a more linear formation. **Above right** Anastassiades in his studio. **Below** the four-storey merchant's house with a showroom on the ground floor

Above left the ground floor is dedicated to Anastassiades' business with a small gallery space off to the right of the hall and the large office at the back of the building. The ceiling light and matching wall light are part of his IC range for Flos. **Above right** what was once a Victorian butcher's is now Anastassiades' showroom. **Below** in the master bedroom, fitted floor-to-ceiling wardrobes with invisible push catches maintain the less-is-more theme. The painting is a portrait of Anastassiades by his friend the artist Aliki Krikidi

cold nature of minimalism; Anastassiades himself is neat and softly spoken but also has a certain Mediterranean warmth.

With the help of a friend, the Belgian architect Wim de Mul, it took about two years to gut the entire building and reset the floor levels to where they are today. When I visit, the two-bedroom house has been commandeered for an installation of two lighting ranges that Anastassiades has designed for the Italian manufacturer Flos. The first evidence of these is in the entrance hallway – an all-white space with mahogany floors and detailing that embodies Anastassiades' angular aesthetic. Hanging from the ceiling is one of his Flos IC lights, an opaque glass sphere set within a right angle of brushed brass. He explains that seeing a video of a juggler balancing a ball on the tips of his fingers inspired the series of lights, which 'capture the perfect moment of tension, when you wonder, "Is the ball going to fall?"'

To the right is the designer's showroom, which was originally a butcher's shop. The space is just big enough to display a selection of his lighting,

furniture and mirror designs. Along the hall, to the back of the house, is Anastassiades' studio, where he and a small team design, make and sell much of his work. Shelves crammed with components and prototypes belie what awaits above.

The first floor is a largely open-plan space. A mahogany galley kitchen is positioned between the dining area at the front of the house and a simply furnished sitting room in the rear extension, added four years after the initial work. The ceilings are high, the walls all white and unadorned, and the few shelves are virtually empty. The closest things to decoration are a geometrically skew-whiff copper mirror that Anastassiades designed in 2006 and a few groupings of polished oval stones that he has been collecting for 15 years from a village near Jaipur. He refers to these as another of his obsessions.

Above the dining table is one of Anastassiades' String lights for Flos, its long black flex connected to the walls and ceiling, creating a rectangular outline at the end of which a conical black pendant hangs over the table. Another of these rectilinear



shapes fills the double-height space alongside the staircase leading to the master bedroom; this one is finished with two spherical pendants.

It is the first time Anastassiades has created a piece with the intention of it being mass-produced. In fact, he has spent 25 years avoiding commissions from the type of manufacturer that most designers aspire to work with. 'I decided early to do production for myself,' he explains. 'I wanted the freedom of not having to rely on a system that can interrupt the creative flow. I found the idea of it very demoralising.'

For years he has produced designs himself and nurtured a network of small family-run workshops in Britain which make pieces that have found their ways into design galleries such as Nilufar in Milan, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and, most recently, the Point Centre for Contemporary Art in Nicosia, which staged a solo exhibition of his conceptual objects.

Anastassiades was introduced to the CEO of Flos, Piero Gandini, by the American design entrepreneur Murray Moss at the biennial lighting

exhibition Euro luce in Milan in 2011. The Spanish designer Patricia Urquiola apparently told Gandini he 'would be stupid' not to work with Anastassiades. A meeting in the back of a London taxi soon followed, and last year Anastassiades' first foray into mass-produced design was one of the high-lights of the Flos stand. Earlier this year the String light was shortlisted in the product category of the Design Museum's Designs of the Year award.

An open staircase leads to the bedroom on the second floor, above which is the most recent addition to the house, a meditation space. Here a wall of retractable windows takes advantage of the view from the back of the building – north, towards the Thames, overlooking the London Eye.

Anastassiades' achievement with this house lies not only in the way it serves his specific needs – somewhere to work and live, a place to sleep and contemplate – but also in how comfortably it sits within its environment. 'I like to think it's not very different from how it was when it was built,' he says. 'Just a butcher living above his shop.' michaelanastassiades.com; flos.com