

A full-page photograph of a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a dark blue t-shirt and jeans, standing in a minimalist room. To his left is a tall, red metal sculpture with four vertical poles and four white spherical weights. Behind him are two empty red rectangular frames on a light-colored wall. To his right is a low, wide wooden cabinet. The floor is made of light-colored wood planks.

Let there be light

In the heart of Waterloo, the home of designer Michael Anastassiades is a minimalist's dream – and a place for reflection



Words AIMEE FARRELL
Photographs SOPHIA SPRING

'I lived without furniture for a long time': Michael Anastassiades (left) with his water-inspired 'Crossette' design for Nilufar Gallery. Above: the kitchen with parquet floor from County Hall, mahogany cabinets in galley formation, and a view of the garden

The place was a dump," says Michael Anastassiades of his now pristine five-storey home on Lower Marsh in Waterloo. "There wasn't even a bathroom." Built in the 1800s as a merchant's house, it most recently accommodated a fashion store and had been uninhabited for decades when he moved in. Now, 20 years on, the property has slowly evolved into an elegant, airy home that serves as canvas for the Cyprus-born lighting and furniture designer's unequivocally modernist tastes. "Right from the beginning there was no finished plan for anything in the house," he says of the space, which takes inspiration from the open-plan lower layout at the Sir John Soane's Museum. "It was a very organic process." Working with his architect friend Wim de Mul, after demolishing the interior, knocking out ceilings and shifting stairwells, they began the gradual process of rebuilding.

Much of the muted look of the place was dictated by the parquet mahogany floor, which neatly demarcates each area. Reclaimed from a local builder, it once decked the nearby County Hall, and had to be cleaned and spliced after arriving in 200 bin bags covered in staples and tar. "There's nothing straight about it," he says. "But it gives the place character."

In the kitchen, mahogany cabinets are set in a galley formation – each stacked with wonderfully amorphous crockery by ceramicist Ingegerd Råman.

Even as trains screech in and out of the nearby station, it all feels surprisingly zen. Anastassiades added a glass-ceilinged first-floor living space that looks out on to a wooden terrace abundant with white wisteria and Himalayan birch trees. Planted by his neighbour, garden designer Dan Pearson, it's a verdant haven in an area noted for its absence of green. Here, marble meditation stools sit alongside the series of compressed sand

stones he gathered from a Spanish beach ("I love collecting stones. I even buy them on eBay.") But it's Anastassiades's own designs that really lend serenity to the kitchen, dining and living space. There's the luxurious solid walnut faceted dining table which doubles as a desk, the pair of copper mirrors in graduating sizes that jut beautifully from the partition wall, and the stylish satin brass Tube Chandelier that he's become synonymous with – his linear and spherical lights, in fact, are stationed just about everywhere.

"I've always used it as a platform for experimentation. Many of my designs were originally created for this house," says Anastassiades, describing his minimalist creative process as little more one of elimination and subtraction. That certainly rings true for his latest project, a monolithic public drinking fountain wrought from polished cast bronze that will be installed inside the V&A, and in South Kensington, for this month's

Design



► London Design Festival. Elegantly simple, the split abstracted column has no obvious spout or button and is operated by a sensor.

The hope is that this prototype, borrowing in its neoclassical design from street furniture, such as bollards and letterboxes, will spring up across the capital, as a drinking and refilling station, dispensing with the need for single-use water bottles. "People need to realise how much waste they produce in terms of plastic bottles," he says of the lofty intentions of this first public commission by Charles Asprey and Jane Withers of the London Fountain Co. "Water should be free for everybody."

It's a typically staunch standpoint from a designer who has been nothing short of exacting in his own aesthetic life. For instance, it's only in recent years that Anastassiades has begun to adorn the walls of his home with artworks. "It takes a long time before something gets hung,"

he says of his growing art collection, which includes a darkly minimalist canvas by the German painter Silke Otto-Knapp in the second-floor bedroom. "Not much actually makes it on to the walls."

But it's the green velvet George Smith sofa downstairs that took the most deliberation. "When you're buying things by another designer they really need to reflect the way you think," he says. "I lived without furniture for a long time before deciding this should be the one." Other standouts, such as the leather Charles Eames chair that was a house-warming gift and the pair of Mies van der Rohe

'We have to realise how much waste we produce in terms of plastic bottles. Water should be free for everyone'

Brno seats he picked up in a junk store for £20 a pop, found their place more easily.

There's seemingly no end to this house's evolution. Not long ago, the deterioration of the basement stairs, which lead to the guest area, compelled a switch from marble stairs to an alternating step design that's modelled after Carlo Scarpa's concrete staircase at the Castelvecchio museum in Verona. Soon after, the studio and showroom that once occupied the ground floor was relocated to Camden. Currently used for storage, Anastassiades is considering transforming the remaining rooms into an independent gallery.

At the top of the house is the secluded space Anastassiades added five years ago. Overlooking the market at the front and the mushrooming high-rise developments of Waterloo to the rear, it enjoys some of the finest views of London. "This is a retreat for me," he says of the living room, which is reserved

'I've always used this house as a platform for experimentation': views of the five-storey London home. Anastassiades's lighting designs for FLOS flank the bed alongside a monochromatic Silke Otto Knapp canvas and some of his beloved stone collection (top)

for reading and yoga. It also happens to be the most decorative: there are russet paintings by Cypriot artist Polys Peslikas, a Scandinavian 1930s rug and the archipelago-shaped Lidingö coffee table that he first designed for Svenskt Tenn in 2013. "The whole skyline has changed since I've lived here," he says looking out towards the London Eye, whose arc is perfectly mirrored by the brilliantly bonkers Martine Bedin Super Lamp that sits on the windowsill. You get the sense that Anastassiades is still embracing that flux – both outside and in. ■
A Fountain for London is part of the London Design Festival, 15-23 September (londondesignfestival.com)