



The Master of Light and Space Joseph Dirand's sumptuous, subdued interiors define the decade *By Jon Roth*

The Art of Living:

“I’m like the opposite of the painter who starts with flowers and then makes black paintings before he dies,” Joseph Dirand tells me. “I paint the flower at the end.”

Dirand, probably the most sought-after interior designer on earth, is explaining the evolution of his style. Over his 20-year career, the 43-year-old Parisian has grown from a staunch, stark minimalist into something much richer. You can see it for yourself in his new book, *Interior*, just out from Rizzoli. The first chapter features a massive apartment on Quai Anatole France. It’s a study in muted black and white, limned with the quietest of classical details—an architect’s tribute to the strength of the line. The book closes with another Parisian residence, completed this year for an Eastern European heiress. (“I want you to achieve your dream,” she told him.) The impeccable form is still there, but the blank space

Right: White walls, gray suede, black marble, and varnished wood—the palette at a residence in London’s Cadogan Square. Below: At Montaigne, the Paris home of an Eastern European heiress, Dirand continued to explore gradations of color and texture.



has been shaded in: with marble, cashmere, and suede, geometric tile and parquet floors, even (*mon Dieu!*) a bit of color. It looks like a dream all right.

How do you become the go-to guy in the world of interiors? Start with the right upbringing. Dirand’s parents raised him to appreciate aesthetics: His father was a famed interiors photographer; his mother was a fashion designer. Add some thwarted ambition. “My father always wanted to be an architect,” Dirand says. “I think he planted his dream in me.” Be precocious. (He wrote a small book on Le Corbusier at 12, bought his first Prouvé chair at 17, and started his own agency at 23.) Let the fashion world come calling. (He’s designed stores for Rick Owens, Balmain, and Alexander Wang.) Then get an audience with Kanye West. Enjoy the imprimatur of pop-culture royalty.

And now Dirand is scaling up. This year, he completed a renovation of the Four Seasons at the Surf Club in Miami, a 77-room fusion of Art Deco and midcentury modern with a Latin American accent. Then there’s the 15,000-square-foot New York restaurant with chef Joël Robuchon and developer Aby



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From top: A spare but eclectic approach rules Dirand’s Parisian home; modern art is framed by period boiserie at another Paris apartment; geometric tile and parallel marble slabs make for a monumental kitchen.

Rosen. The mega-yacht he’s working on. Oh, and a full-scale resort community in the Bahamas. “It’s gonna take me all the years I have to live,” he says of that last project. “It’s like designing a tiny country.”

You can tell from his excitement that Dirand prefers to focus on the future. It’s one reason he was hesitant to release a book of past work. But *Interior* is more mission statement than retrospective. “The book was meant to be now,” he says. “It’s the perfect moment between two big chapters of my career.”

Mega-projects or no, Dirand’s maintained the precise eye for detail that made his first, stripped-down interiors such wild successes. At the core is his belief in modern design principles and Old World techniques. Take the paint job in that heiress’s apartment, where walls that are technically one color somehow have the depth of grisaille. First, he mixed his own stucco. Then he found the team that restored Versailles and had them paint it. “Nothing has been painted with a roller,” Dirand says. “We had 40 painters with little brushes, going from the ceiling down in lines. Everything a line.”

Time-consuming, sure. But that’s luxury, he says. “We need to make things the most beautiful way we can.”