

# French design in London

In the decade since Paris design fair PAD launched in London, the French home interiors aesthetic has captivated the cognoscenti. Now new galleries in the capital are spreading the word. **Emma Crichton-Miller** reports

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Ten years ago, a new art fair opened in London's Berkeley Square. It was held in the same month as the flamboyantly successful Frieze, then in its fifth year, which had made London in October the global centre of the contemporary art world. Far from a copycat, however, PAD, or, as its older sister fair in Paris is named, the Pavilion of Art and Design, announced its own separate identity from the start. Founded by two French dealers with legendary client lists – Patrick Perrin (based in Paris) and Stéphane Custot (then based in London) – the fair brought post-industrial design and decorative arts from 1860 to the present day, mostly French, right into the heart of Mayfair. Where Frieze was brash and glamorous, all champagne and eye-popping art against white walls, PAD was chic, with tasteful room sets displaying sought-after French modernist furniture or international contemporary design juxtaposed with Scandinavian ceramics or artist-crafted jewellery. Put another way, Frieze presented contemporary art collecting as a fashionable activity for the wealthy, whereas PAD suggested collecting of all kinds is as much a part of civilised living as fine dining or frequenting a tailor. It was as if our suave continental older cousin had just turned up in an immaculate suit, Picasso etchings under one arm, putting to shame Anglo-Saxon untamed vigour.

Trying to pin down the appeal of French design, Sophie Negropontes, of the Paris-based Galerie Negropontes, who collaborates with designer Hervé Langlais to produce one collection of furniture (€1,800-€60,000) in very limited editions each year, acknowledges the lasting influence of “les arts décoratifs à la française” of the 1930s, '40s and '50s. “They made incredible things, with incredible taste, for one person. That was also our main idea when we founded this gallery in 2013.” Half Greek and half Romanian but brought up in France from the age of 12, she shares the love of her English and American clients for “the finesse and sophistication of French design”, but also credits the French craftsmen with whom she collaborates. Hervé Van der Straeten, a PAD regular with many clients in London, agrees that the fact his pieces (Console Cristalloide, price on request) are handmade by skilled cabinetmakers out of luxurious materials such as bronze, marble, ebony, black lacquer and parchment, is a strong factor in their appeal: “It is easy to mix quality. We French have learnt to make our own cocktail in a smooth and elegant way.”

One admirer is British interior designer Kelly Hoppen. “French design is understated and incredibly well pulled together,” she says. “Whether it is mixing George V with a piece from Christian Liaigre and baroque mirrors while using the simplicity of wooden floors and marble features, it just works.” Among other influences on her own style, she names Liaigre and India Mahdavi. “Gilles & Boissier and François Champsaur are for me ‘the new French elegance’.” Hoppen has commissioned a chandelier by Langlais through Galerie Negropontes. “It is such a great addition to my new home. It draws some vertical lines to emphasise the height of the ceiling, while the soft curves of the metal around the delicate round paper shades are for me the perfect balance.” She also has a bedside table in lacquer (similar designs from about £1,500), sourced from the stylish French antiques dealer Dorian Caffot de Fawes based on London's Lillie Road in a nest of French antiques dealers.



**Carpenters Workshop Gallery**, 3 Albemarle Street, London W1 (020-3051 5939; [www.carpentersworkshopgallery.com](http://www.carpentersworkshopgallery.com)) and branches. **Christie's**, 85 Old Brompton Road, London SW7 (020-7930 6074; [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com)) and branches. **Dutko Gallery**, 18 Davies Street, London W1 (020-7495 4666; [www.dutko.com](http://www.dutko.com)). **Fleur de Galard**, +336-8403 5323; [www.fleurdegalar.com](http://www.fleurdegalar.com). **Francis Sultana**, 2-4 King Street, London SW1 (020-7589 5946; [www.francissultana.com](http://www.francissultana.com)). **Galerie Kreo**, 14A Hay Hill, London W1 (020-7499 4611; [www.galeriekreo.com](http://www.galeriekreo.com)). **Galerie Negropontes**, 60 Rue de Verneuil, 75007 Paris (+331-7118 1951; [www.negropontes-galerie.com](http://www.negropontes-galerie.com)). **Galerie Patrick Seguin**, 45-47 Brook Street, London W1 (020-7499 7766; [www.patrickseguin.com](http://www.patrickseguin.com)) and branch. **Kelly Hoppen Interiors**, 020-3701 9333; [www.kellyhoppen.com](http://www.kellyhoppen.com). **Ochre**, 46-47 Britton Street, London EC1 (020-7096 7372; [www.ochre.net](http://www.ochre.net)) and branches. **PAD London**, 5-9 October 2016, Berkeley Square, London W1 (+331-5330 8520; [www.pad-fairs.com](http://www.pad-fairs.com)).