

## ICONIC STYLE

## Jacques Grange

The interior designer of choice for Yves Saint Laurent, royalty and modern-day stylemakers brings his own poetic yet unpretentious aesthetic to projects over multiple generations and locales.

By Jason Mowen Photographed by François Halard  
PHOTOGRAPHER: ALEXIA ANTSAKLI VARDINOYANNI (PORTRAIT)



Think of the world's greatest interior designers and then go just a little higher, into the stratosphere of chic, and you will find Jacques Grange. He is, in fact, more portraitist than designer: a seer of souls in the vein of Goya, Bacon or Picasso, conjuring rooms with his insight into the unexpressed yearnings of his clients. His brushstrokes, however, are so singular that to the untrained eye, it's difficult to pick two interiors as being by the same hand. One might be patterned and romantic, another is playful and yet another is streamlined and sleek. None allow for quick categorisation, united only in their spirit of elegant nonchalance, a predilection for all things Jean-Michel Frank and what seems to be a clientele in universal possession of exceptional paintings by the likes of Goya, Bacon and Picasso.

The designer's 2009 monograph, *Jacques Grange Interiors*, is one of the finest books ever to be published on interior design. I say one of, as it shares top place with *The Private World of Yves Saint Laurent & Pierre Bergé* from 2009. Some rooms appear in both books as, from 1974, Grange designed all homes belonging to the couturier and his art-loving partner. Saint Laurent would suggest the atmosphere — the films of Michelangelo Antonioni for his 'bachelor' studio in Paris, or Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* for Château Gabriel in Deauville — and Grange would bring his esoteric visions to life. Bergé, meanwhile, was wary of interior designers but came to regard Grange as "a friend able to grasp and to share a sense of taste and understanding". The collaboration produced a wondrous

portfolio of residential interiors, widely considered works of art in their own right. That's not to say that over the past decade the continuum of Grange's brand of unpretentious beauty has been any less impressive, as evidenced in a second monograph, *Jacques Grange Recent Work*, published by Flammarion last year. "The style of projects in my second book is less cluttered and more contemporary," says Grange. "Art is also more present."

Born in 1944, Grange attended the École Boulle, a college of fine arts and crafts in Paris, followed by the École Camondo to focus on interior design. This foundation was reinforced when he landed a job interning for decorator Henri Samuel. He came into the orbit of art patrons Marie-Laure and Charles de Noailles — and their legendary 1920s interior by Jean-Michel Frank — as well as decorator Madeleine Castaing, from whom he learned the guiding principle of his career: "In decoration you should always evoke, never reconstruct." When he founded his own studio in the early '70s, his first major client was Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, twin sister of the Shah of Iran.

Recent projects include Paris apartments, London townhouses and New York penthouses. There's also a Venetian palazzo, a medieval castle in the South of France, and a 1954 Richard Neutra house in Los Angeles; a marriage of genres — French chic and California modern — especially delightful to see. In Paris, the home of Eileen Gray has been re-imagined for a collector of art and design while a new black-and-white mosaic floor anchors the grand salon of a 19th-century hôtel particulier, itself grounded by a spectacular swimming pool with lighting by American artist James Turrell. >>

PHOTOGRAPHER: ALEXIA ANTSAKLI VARDINOYANNI (PORTRAIT)



**THIS PAGE** for his Paris apartment, formerly home to the writer Colette, interior designer Jacques Grange has realised a metal and wood spiral staircase, inspired by Le Corbusier; 18th-century chairs; Dogon mask; artwork by François Morellet. **OPPOSITE PAGE** interior designer Jacques Grange.





**THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT** in a bathroom of a hotel particulier in Paris, satin spar gypsum **armoires** and marble **dressing table** designed by Jacques Grange; Versailles parquet **floor**. In a bedroom of Grange's home, **artwork** by Maurizio Cattelan. In a corner of the dining room of Pierre Passebon's Paris apartment, **sculpture** by Fausto Melotti; **table** by Mattia Bonetti.



« “Grange designed the elaborate mosaic-tiled pool in a basement space where the lines between art, architecture and interior design are abolished,” writes Pierre Passebon, Grange’s partner who penned both monographs. Passebon’s own apartment is another favourite, with its striking 16th-century marble fireplace in the form of a grotesque mask and nods to the Vienna Secession. “Jacques makes houses like others make poetry, music or paintings,” he says.

Fashion remains omnipresent. There is his collaboration with Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen on the interior of The Row’s first store in New York, a boutique with the intimate feel of a home. And in Paris, white slipcovered armchairs and a magnificent Coromandel screen punctuate the silvery elegance of the Chanel haute couture salons at 31 rue Cambon — Grange’s first time working for the maison, due to a long-held falling out between the Saint Laurent and Lagerfeld camps.

The inner workings of Grange’s own soul are perhaps best contained within the pale walls of his eclectic apartment that once belonged to the writer Colette. The space was recently expanded and now connects to an additional, upper floor via a ribbon-like spiral staircase inspired by Le Corbusier. Other subtleties are revealed at his beach house in Comporta, Portugal, where he spends two idyllic months each year. So dreamy is this little enclave of huts overlooking the Atlantic, it precipitated a new aesthetic movement: the Comporta Style. (Elements can be found at The Stork Club, Grange and Passebon’s boutique in Carvalhal village.) “For me, luxury is a space in the wilderness,” Grange has said. “You walk to the beach over the dunes and often it is empty. You wake up and you see a stork fly above you. That is luxury.” **VL** @jacques.grange

