

James Traub: The Anti-Anti-Semite Simon Norfolk and Jim Holt: Where Protons Collide!

The New York Times Magazine

JANUARY 14, 2007 / SECTION 6

I Was a Child Soldier

What an African
civil war did to a boy.

A memoir by Ishmael Beah

At home with Marc Newson, an industrial designer who has always been ahead of the curve. By Alice Rawsthorn

Smooth Move

When Marc Newson first arrived in Paris as a struggling young designer in the early 1990s, he stayed in an attic in the French garment district. It was small, with an ominous smell. In those days Newson was so broke that his only pair of shoes had holes worn through the toes.

His shoes are still holey, but only because Newson, now one of the world's most-sought-after industrial designers, purposely designed them like that for Nike. And the house he recently bought in Paris — a 1950s redbrick villa perched above the Gothic follies of the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont, on one of the highest hills in the city — is a large step up as well. Houses are even rarer in Paris than they are in Manhattan, and houses with gardens and picture-postcard views are scarcer still. "I love this little area and stumbled on the house walking around one day," Newson says. "Every month for two years I'd call the owner out of the blue and pester him to let me live here." The owner finally agreed to

Photographs by Richard Barnes

The open-plan second floor of Marc Newson's house in Paris includes areas for sleeping and working; the latter, furnished with a table and chair of his own design, enjoys a sweeping view of the city.



Top, from left: The master bath, designed by Newson in Carrara marble, looks out at the work and sleeping areas, which are paved with flooring by Edelman Leather. On the Newson-designed sink is one of his cult-item Ikepod watches, which will be reissued this year. On the first floor, a view from the dining area to the stairway. Newson's 1969 Lamborghini Miura sits in its climate-controlled garage. Bottom, from left: The front door and stairway. The powder room's curved doorway frames a view of the kitchen, with its marble counters and enameled blue steel cabinets. In the living-dining area, furniture designed by Newson is accented by Achille Castiglioni's classic Arco lamp and a vintage surfboard.

sell, and Newson, who lives in London, rebuilt the house as a pied-à-terre for himself and his girlfriend, Charlotte Stockdale, a British fashion stylist, and as a laboratory for his design ideas.

Even if you have never heard of Marc Newson, you'll recognize his design style, if only because so many other designers have copied it. (See Pages 56 and 57 for more examples of his work.) All of those coolly futuristic bars and lobbies that look as if they have floated off a 1960s sci-fi movie set owe something to him. Newson, a genial 43-year-old Australian with a straggly beard and a deceptively casual dress sense, is nothing if not prolific. Besides those holey Nike sneakers, he has designed a concept car for Ford, Alessi cutlery, pots and pans for Tefal and Samsonite luggage. Working from design studios in London and Paris, he spends much of his time jetting to and from projects, like the aircraft interiors and airport lounges he's designing for Qantas and kitchen equipment for Smeg in Italy.

Newson is also the reigning superstar of what the auction houses call "design art"—a name coined for limited editions of famously uncomfortable sculptural furniture. Last summer, a prototype of the 1986 Lockheed Lounge, a chaise he designed two years out of art school, set a record for the work of a living designer when it fetched \$968,000 at Sotheby's. At last month's Design Miami fair, all 12 of his Chop Top tables sold out in 20 minutes—at a reported \$170,000 a pop.

Later this month, he'll open an exhibition of new work at the Gagolian Gallery in Chelsea, the preparations for which dovetailed with the renovation of the Paris house. There are echoes of each project in the other, notably in the Carrara marble pieces that Newson created for the show. "The factory I work with in Carrara has the capability to carve impossible shapes out of the marble that no one else can do," he says. "Marble is kind of uncool, because it has so many nasty associations, but it looks and feels beautiful." This is the first time that Gagolian, arguably the world's most powerful art dealer, will market a designer like an A-list artist; the exhibition is a milestone for Newson, who spent three years working on it. "It's kind of a big deal," he says, laughing. "I've used it as an excuse to do all these new things that I've always wanted to do—making mad, completely over-the-top shapes."

Such shapes are at the heart of Newson's work. After studying jewelry and sculpture, he chose to work on a larger scale in design, starting with handmade pieces like the Lockheed Lounge. As his reputation has risen, he has been able to use increasingly sophisticated technologies, treating design as a playground where he experiments with advanced soft-

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The living area is sparsely furnished with a Josef Frank sofa from Svenskt Tenn, one of Newson's Wood Chairs and a television; Flaminio Bertoni's sketch of the Citroën DS19 hangs in an ornate frame.

ware programs and production processes to twist and stretch materials to their limits. The most extreme examples are his limited editions, but the same contorted curves are visible in his sneakers and cutlery. Newson's designs are always visually seductive, with an underlying technical rigor and exquisite detailing, all of which is evident in the Paris house.

Built in 1953 by the French architect Fernand Riehl as his home and office, it was run-down when Newson took it on. Working with Sebastian Segers, an architect in his Paris studio, he gutted the building and restored most of the structural features. "Riehl really knew what he was doing," Newson observes. "His structural decisions were spot-on, down to the way the windows were fabricated." Newson then worked with a team of artisans, specifying every element, from the finish on the plaster to the brass beading that separates the walls from the floors, even the doorknobs.

The ground floor consists of an open-plan living room and the kitchen, where Newson is learning how to cook on the enormous Aga range. He designed the kitchen cupboards from sheet steel — "to look like a toolbox" — painted in the Aga's forget-me-not blue. The marble kitchen work surfaces — as well as the house's two bathrooms — were made to his designs by the same Italian quarry he worked with for the Gagosian show.

Once you have torn your eyes away from the view of Paris through the living-room window, you spot Newson's influences and enthusiasms strewn around the room. A Flaminio Bertoni sketch of his Citroën DS19 hangs on one wall, with a vintage surfboard propped against another. The flamboyant Josef Frank floral print on the sofa is illuminated by Achille Castiglioni's Arco floor lamp and a light by Serge Mouille, a gift from the fashion designer Azzedine Alaïa, for whom Newson recently designed a shoe store. The dining table is made from a slab of African bubinga wood. "You should look underneath," he says, bobbing down to inspect the latticed structure.

Most of the second floor is devoted to the bedroom, where a Gaetano Pesce Up chair stands beside a bed designed by Newson for the Hotel Puerta America in Madrid. A Franco Albini shelving system is filled with books and a set of "Seven Samurai" dolls inspired by his favorite Akira Kurosawa movie. When friends come to stay, he divides the room into two spaces by rolling out a foldaway screen to extend the turquoise lacquered wardrobes into a "wall."

Tucked away in the basement garage is a curvaceous, immaculately restored 1969 Lamborghini Miura, parked in museum-worthy climatologically correct conditions. "I can't imagine ever getting rid of this place," Newson says happily. "It's unique — a house with a garage, a garden and the best view of Paris."

