



Homes



A lot of bottle

French artist Gérard Puvlis's work may be eccentric, but his beautiful Lyon home is a lesson in how to mix different eras and styles. Jeremy Callaghan takes a look. Photographs by Gaelle Le Boulicaut

Left: Puvlis's art collection includes work by Albert Gleizes and Georges Braque. The rare 1960s Djinn chair and lounge are by French designer, Olivier Mourgue for Arconas. **1** Borrow his trick of displaying art by layering different works against each other: it's not as precarious as it looks, so long as the larger pieces at the back are fixed to a wall. Prop smaller artworks on a bookcase or hang pieces from the shelves **2** Above: the school chair and desk, a prized flea-market find, was designed by Jacques Hitier in 1950.



Left: the main living space features various work stations, including this desk and a reclaimed barber's chair. The collage on the left is by Puvis.
3 Think carefully about what unites the shapes you group together. These wooden toys and art models found in a Brussels flea market reminded Puvis of the sculptural work of Brancusi.
 Below: the wine bottle foils and tools with which Puvis makes his unusual sculptures and collages.
 Bottom: Puvis at home



Gérard Puvis knows a thing or two about wine. For starters, he's French, so a knowledge of vineyards and vintages is practically his birthright; second, he's managed to transform the nation's favourite drink into a fertile source of inspiration for his art. But it's not inebriation or debauchery that fires his imagination; instead Puvis uses the physical remnants of wine consumption, transforming the tin foil bottle sleeves into delicate sculptures and collages.

"I work with some great chefs in France, like Paul Bocuse, who puts aside the caps and foils of some of the world's best bottles for me," Puvis says. "Unfortunately, I'm not able to drink enough myself to supply the amount I need for my work."

This work hasn't always been small-scale. Since leaving Lyon's Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts in the early 1970s, Puvis has made a name for himself with large-scale paintings, murals and sculptures. As well as having garnered awards, his pieces form part of the permanent collection at Paris's Pompidou Centre. But, for now, wine bottles are his focus.

"As a painter, you must have something to say, and I don't think an artist can have something to say for his entire life," he says. "It's good to have time out, away from

that form of expression. I could paint huge theatrical murals for 40 years, but it would be the death of me as a painter."

Puvis lives in a sprawling third-floor apartment in an 18th-century town house overlooking one of Lyon's oldest quarters. It's a calm, composed world featuring his personal collection of art and objects amassed over the years. The main living room is an unlikely atelier, without the paint splatters or rolls of canvases you'd expect of an artist's space. Instead, Puvis has grouped together objects and furniture with almost clinical accuracy.

"I like beautiful spaces, beautiful objects," Puvis says. "I'm constantly looking at my apartment and seeing something else, another arrangement, another way of ordering things. I often turn paintings to face the wall, depending on how I feel. I like changing them around. It opens me up to new things creatively."

To work, Puvis will sit in the vintage barber's chair that he's occupied for the past 30 years, or perch on a Gerrit Rietveld Zig-Zag chair in front of a folding Swiss army field desk, between the room's two large picture windows. The room is book-ended by two classic marble fireplaces. Above one sits a huddle of modern art; the other features a collection of old wooden toys

House rules

Most prized possession My papier-mache masks, which I made in the 1950s for a circus performance.

Biggest extravagance An enormous metal and wood central island in the kitchen, which I made myself. I haven't a clue how to cook. My friends get a lot of use out of it, though.

If I could own any art work... it would be something by Picasso, Bacon or Miró.

Favourite detail A glass door based on one of my paintings.

Dream home I would love to live in the Fondation Maeght, a museum of modern art in St Paul de Vences, surrounded by friends and family.



sourced from a Brussels flea market, which remind Puvis of the work of Brancusi. Everything has its place.

"I'm virtually maniacal about where I put things," he says. "It's a clinical space, designed so I can find exactly what I'm looking for, even with my eyes closed."

The apartment's 18th-century features act as a backdrop to pieces, from a Louis XVI chest of drawers to chairs by contemporary design brand Skitsch. A focal point in the living room is a collection of rare 1960s Djinn chairs and loungers by French designer Olivier Mourgue, which appeared in Stanley Kubrick's film 2001: A Space Odyssey. But Puvis says he's rarely swayed by trends: "I'm aware that Mourgue's designs are in high demand, but I swear that if one day I walk in here and they no longer please me, I will have no hesitation in replacing them."

This pragmatism influences everything Puvis does, from trawling flea markets for objects he finds "simple and beautiful" to his wine foil sculptures. "Sometimes people who commission work from me have their own collection of foils, or a foil from a special bottle they drank with a special person," he says. "My job is to listen to their story, and from it make another. That simplicity appeals to me." ●

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