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## CHARLES ZANA



Based in a courtyard studio on Paris's Left Bank, Charles Zana's architectural practice creates exceptional spaces all over the world and divides its time between residential, shop and exhibition design projects. Interiors are modern and serene, highly structured and richly poetic.

### DIRECTORY



**CHARLES ZANA**  
ARCHITECTURE

Portrait picture photo credit: Yannick Labrousse

## What is your style?

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Modern classic. It is a simple elegance in the style of French interior designer Jean-Michel Frank. He was known for his minimalist decor, but often used sumptuous materials such as shagreen, straw marquetry or mica. I am also a big fan of the Italian architect and designer Ettore Sottsass.

I don't like too much decoration, but I do like quality materials. I pay a lot of attention to the flow of the home, then the colour, the materials and then the light.

## How important is colour in your interiors?

## What inspires you?

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Even if colour is subtle, it is crucial. My use of colour has been inspired by my passion for collecting Italian designer ceramics from 70s to 80s. I have over 300 vases and earlier this year I presented a selection of these at the Musee Eugene Delacroix including Andrea Branzi, Alessandro Mendini, Michele de Lucchi and Ettore Sottsass. For next year, I am working on an exhibition of Sottsass's Totems that will be the first time all these colourful ceramics are gathered together.

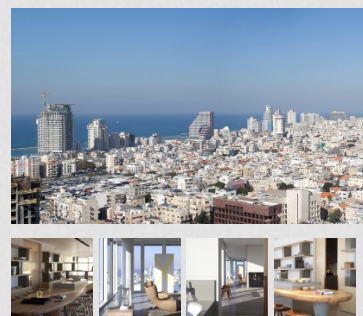


The exhibition 'Vasi e Fiori' at Musee Eugene Delacroix – Photo Credit: Jaques Pépion

## FEATURED PROJECTS

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### TEL AVIV APARTMENT



## Describe your house:

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It's unusual for the city of Paris, but we live in a house and not an apartment. It's very much like an old English house, but with modern design. I like to be contextual and take the story of my design from the building or the city or even the landscape, but I think you can be modern in a heritage property.

## What's your trademark?

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My interest in art and my ability to reshape architectural volumes to provide a setting for the owners' art and collectibles, so that their cherished pieces come to life.

You will always see me at all the major art fairs – Basel, Frieze and the Venice Biennale. I enjoy the Maastricht Fine Art and Antiques Fair even though it's not my style. I like it because you have the opportunity to see the best whether it's African tribal artefacts, 18th-century art, Japanese ceramics – the quality is amazing. I'm excited by 20th-century design personally, but it's good to get your eye on old objects and you see what is contemporary about them. It's very important as an architect to know about culture.



Art is brought to life in this Parisian apartment – Photo Credit:  
Francesca Mantovani

## How did your big break come about?

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In 1998/99, I was asked to design a 2,000-sq-m house in Switzerland. Up to that point my practice had been doing 300-sq-m apartments. It was a beautiful place – quiet and peaceful – and I told the owners that I would work in the spirit of the place as Frank Lloyd Wright had done with his Prairie houses. This impressed them – luckily they must have also been fans of Frank Lloyd Wright – and I understood that we were trusted as they handed us the keys and said let's see what you can do.



This Swiss chalet took inspiration from its tranquil setting –  
Photo Credit: Jaques Pépion

## Describe your biggest challenge:

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When you are an architect and you are educated about many things, you can want to put too much into a project. You are tempted to include everything, but too much is not good. The biggest challenge is to stay focused. If anything I like to take things away.

## Which design shop or gallery do you most enjoy visiting?

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I visit lots of art galleries and design shops, so I can't just give you one. In Paris, I like **Tornabuoni** for Italian art and **Kamel Mennour** for a wider range of artists whilst **Galerie 1900-2000** focuses on the avante-garde movements of the 20th-century. When I'm in Brussels, I go to **Xavier Hufkens**. For design shops, there's **Galerie Kreo** in Paris and London, **Friedman Benda** in New York and **Libby Sellers** in London.

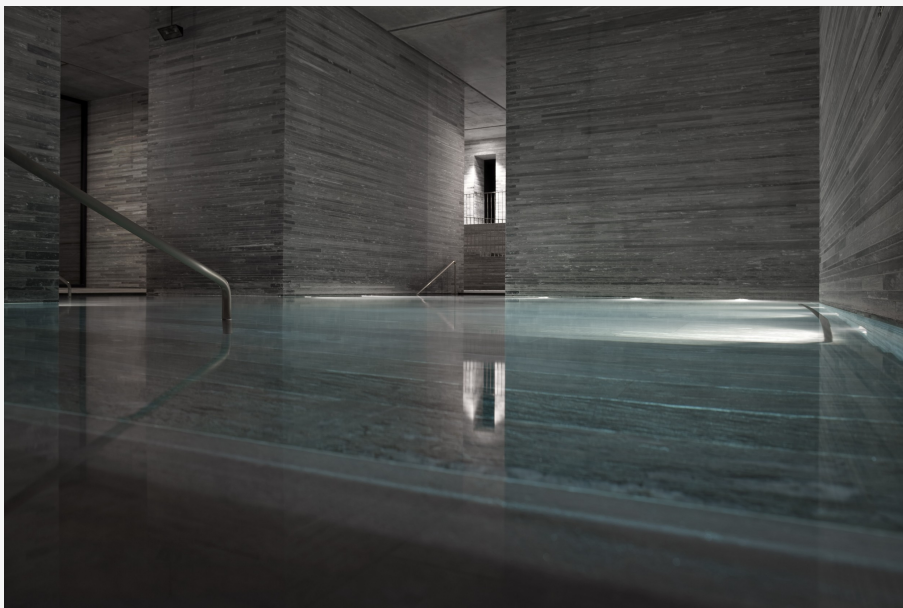


The exterior of Libby Sellers Gallery in London's Fitzrovia –  
Photo Credit: Ed Reeve

## Is there a building that has inspired you above and beyond others?

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The **Therme Vals Spa** by Peter Zumthor is a conceptual building in the mountain at Graubunden Canton, Switzerland that is linked to the landscape. It is built with layer upon layer of locally quarried stone and pays homage to its surroundings. The flow of the internal space is carefully thought out, leading bathers to predetermined points and to discover certain views.



Therme Vals Spa, Switzerland – Photo Credit: Therme Vals

## Who most influenced your creative vision?

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I've already mentioned Jean-Michel Frank and Ettore Sottsass, but there are others. I admire people who have broken the rules and changed the world.

## What material do you most like using – and why?

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I like parquet in a simple wood such as pine. I like its simplicity.



This showroom for the fashion brand Maje draws its references from a classic apartment from the floors to the mouldings – Photo Credit: Jacques Pépion



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