

# an Orientalist

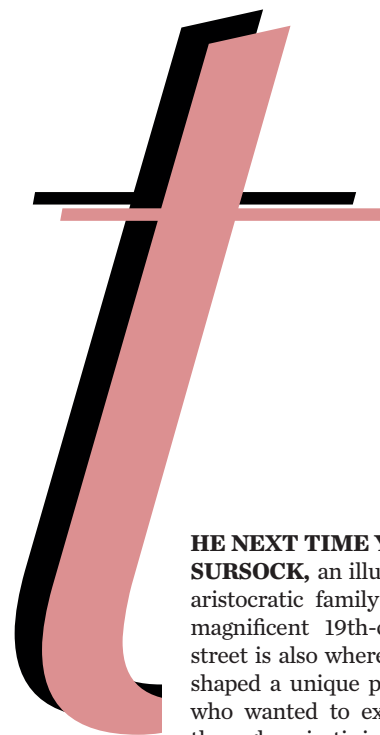
GRANDIOSE  
ARCHITECTURE,  
A FASCINATING ART  
COLLECTION, AND  
PRECIOUS MATERIALS  
AND TEXTURES SET  
THE TONE IN THIS  
LEBANESE HOME  
THAT INCORPORATES  
THE FANTASIES OF  
ORIENTALISM WITH  
MODERN LUXURY

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*In the main living room,  
paintings by Jean-François  
Portaels, Charles-Théodore  
Frère, Emile Jean-Horace  
Vernet, Hans Zatzka and  
Otto Pilny are some of the  
masterpieces. Objects from  
the 19th century, by  
Louis-Constant Sévin,  
Edouard Lièvre, Viardot  
and La Maison Christoffle  
– to name only a few –  
complement the  
Orientalist atmosphere*

# fantasy





**THE NEXT TIME YOU VISIT BEIRUT, STOP BY RUE SURSOCK**, an illustrious, historic street named after an aristocratic family in the Achrafieh district. Home to magnificent 19th-century mansions and palaces, the street is also where star interior designer Ramy Boutros shaped a unique pied-à-terre for a couple from Kuwait who wanted to experiment with a sense of exoticism through majestic interiors.

The apartment occupies the first floor of an ancient two-level Lebanese house that was split into two independent parts some years ago. “We reworked on the façades and the layout as this floor originally accommodates 650 square metres of bedrooms,” explains Boutros. “We added big windows to the new main living space, which has incredible views over the gardens of the Sursock Palace, the city’s grandest house.”

Passionate about art, culture and history, the owners have properties all over the globe, always valuing unique locales. And this one is no exception. “My client wanted a home that is full of character,” states Boutros. Mainly developed in the 19th century though art and architecture, the Orientalist style of the home reflects perceptions of Asia through European eyes. “I tried to translate that into this home, by adapting long-established traditions to the 21st century. The stained glass windows, the decorative woodwork and the five-metre-high ceiling are some of the characteristics of this style that we wanted to highlight. When opening the 3.5-metre-high doors of this apartment—which are the statement of this project—the objective was to give the feeling that the interiors have always been here, that the walls could tell 100-year-old stories.”

The interior designer aimed to recreate the past in a timeless space bathed in natural light and adorned with

rich textures and materials, as well as powdery colours. Like a treasure that’s found a new lease of life, this project defies time. Each portion of paving was done according to traditional techniques in order to give the appearance of age. The abundance of wood provides a warm yet elegant atmosphere. “To me, this apartment epitomises the opulence of bygone eras,” Boutros says. “It exudes sensuality, fantasy and passion.”

Another key contribution to the space is the lighting of artworks and precious objects from the owners’ collection, all executed in a discreet and natural way. At any time of the day and in every nook of the space, the sublime pieces stand out. “Lighting contributes to almost 50 per cent of the success of an interior,” explains Boutros. “In this home, we defined how to position the doors and windows, and we used the double exposure to create the right balance.”

The studio of the late Joe Tohmé—based in Lebanon—specially created the dining room table and chairs, consoles, coffee tables, armchairs and daybeds, while Orient expert Gabriel El Daher found rare pieces to complement the decoration. From Beirut to Paris and London to New York, Boutros also travelled the world with his client looking for the perfect furniture and accessories. “Every project leads to a new story, of translating my client’s personality into architecture and interior spaces with the juxtaposition of textures, materials and colours,” Boutros says. “The owner of this

project really looks like her Beirut home. The way she dresses, how she lives in it, all are reminiscent of the mysterious tales of the *One Thousand and One Nights*.”

*The Kuwaiti owners are passionate about art, culture and history*

*Opposite: In the main **living room**, a 19th century painting by Jean-François Portaels. On top of an Ottoman-style console by Ateliers de Joe Tohmé, old Paris porcelain vases on each side of the clock. Flanking the console, marble and enamel vases by Eugène Cornu*





A Qajar opaline small carafe from the 19th century and an ottoman mirror from the 19th century are on display in the **Oriental living space**

Opposite: Monumental doors and some Ottoman-style colonnades adorn the same room where 18th century Ottoman panels are made of wood and inlaid with ivory and mother-of-pearl





*In the **dining room**, a bud vase, a 19th century Bohemia crystal small bottle and an 18th century blue Chinese vase are in harmony with the rest of the decor*



*“The objective was to give the feeling that the walls could tell 100-year-old stories”*



*Sculpted coffered ceilings and wood walls in the **dining room** are the perfect backdrop for the collections of 18th century antique Chinese vases and Japanese Imari plates (Meiji period), as well as the monumental French Chinoiserie style painting*





*“This Rue Sursock apartment exudes sensuality, fantasy and passion”*

*In the **transitional space** between the two living rooms, symmetry plays an important role. The Ottoman-style daybed was made by Ateliers Joe Tohmé and the 19th century painting, A Dance at Sunset, is by Swiss artist Otto Pilny*



In the **bedroom**, the impressive four-poster bed is the pièce de résistance. Below: The **powder room** is made to measure, designed in order to complete the Orientalist fantasy. Marble and classic colonnades pay homage to the “gilded age”, says the designer

Opposite: At the **entrance**, marble mosaic paving and patina-finished walls. The chandelier by Ferdinand Barbedienne dates back to the 19th century



*From Beirut to Paris and London, Ramy Boutros travelled the world with his client looking for the perfect furniture and accessories*

