

# KONFEKT

The Magazine for Sharp Dressing, Drinking, Dining, Travel & Design.

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Sarah wears jumper by Celine



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by the creators of MONOCLE

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# SOUND IDEAS

Entranced by German engineer Rudolf Diesel's inventive spirit, architect and designer Marie Aigner moved into his former house in Munich. The imposing Wilhelminian villa is now home to her noise-absorbing furniture and acoustic installations made from recycled materials.

Photographer — Conny Mirbach  
 Writer — Ilona Marx

Marie Aigner meets *Konfekt* on the stone steps that lead to the front door of a large fin-de-siècle villa on Munich's Höchlstrasse. Wearing cream-coloured wool trousers and white leather loafers, the 46-year-old architect opens the door and shepherds us through a bright hallway, where the morning sun shines through colourful windows and projects playful patterns onto the dark walnut panelling. Soon the conversation is in full flow; Aigner is keen to make clear that her idol is not the house's former owner Rudolf Diesel, inventor of the engine that bears his name, but rather designer Dieter Rams. "Like he does, I feel that design must be useful, honest, environmentally friendly, durable and easy to understand," she says.

Yet it was Diesel's eye and style that drew her to this corner of Munich. "My husband and I had been eyeing the place for a long time," says Aigner. "But when it became available, we hesitated. Living in a house with so much history comes with a certain amount of responsibility. But I fell in love with the details." The house was technologically advanced for its day and Aigner couldn't resist the custom-designed flourishes installed by architect Max Littmann in 1899: sliding doors that disappear into the wall, the double windows with mechanical hinges, the ventilation ducts that keep the place cool in summer without it becoming draughty in winter. "Rudolf Diesel's





“Rudolf Diesel’s demands left a stamp everywhere in this house. He wasn’t your average client”

demands left a stamp everywhere in this house,” she says. “He wasn’t your average client.”

But Aigner has applied her own style to the interior of her Höchlstrasse villa too. First she oversaw its restoration, polishing the parquet and repairing the lavish walnut panelling. Once the process was complete she reached for the paint pot. Using strong Prussian blues, violet and vibrant grass greens, she injected into the building her distinctive brand of modernity that now stands in stark contrast to the dark panelling and the bacchanalian stucco, high above our heads on the 6 metre-high ceiling.

When it came to furniture, she took an eclectic view of design classics. She chose two petrol-blue leather sofas by Swiss firm De Sede, which flank resin coffee tables by McCollin Bryan, a London-based furniture studio whose work she discovered in Porto Cervo in Sardinia. Around the dining table, which has been assembled from black and white diagonal stripes, are Cassina leather chairs in natural tones. In her office she works at a bright-red desk of her own design. “As an architect I am always thinking about the shape, light and material,” she says, adding that strong, bright colours are a stylistic device that she often uses in her work.

Her approach to collecting art and design is similarly bold. On the mantelpiece there’s a green silicon vase by Gaetano Pesce; in the dining room a sculpture of a housefly by American artist Rob Wynne clings to the wall. “I have been collecting art for 30 years,” says Aigner, who admits to rowing back as an investor from what she saw as an “overheated market” about 15 years ago. “Now I only buy what interests me personally,” she says as we enter the kitchen, where Richard Avedon’s portraits of The Beatles adorn the walls. She puts on the kettle for tea and opens a bag of fresh pretzels.

“The hallway is my favourite place to be, especially at this time of day,” she says as we step back into the imposing hall, clutching mugs of hot Earl Grey, and walk over to see the first artwork she bought: an Ernő Főth abstract that she discovered in Budapest at the age of 16, which now sits above the mantelpiece. “I came across this painting by Főth on a holiday trip that I took with a friend,” she says. “It was dark, mysterious and difficult to decipher. After I bought the painting, I didn’t want to take it to our hotel but I also didn’t want to leave it alone in the car overnight. So I spent the night with it in the Ford Fiesta.” Aigner smiles and sips her tea. Today her initial acquisition is surrounded by heirlooms and subsequent finds from around Europe. Nudes, photographs and landscape paintings hang on the walls in a salon-style cluster.

In front of the mantelpiece the architect has arranged an ensemble of her creations: a chaise longue with sound-absorbing cushions; a grey armchair entitled Peter; and a yellow bench named The Big Dumbo. “Good design unites function and form,” she says, echoing her idol Rams. “Obstacles are there to be overcome. They often lead to better outcomes when you’re designing. Anything that is too easy risks being superficial.”

Most of Aigner’s furniture and lighting designs have a primary function and a benefit: that they absorb sound.



“I design cabinets, desks, seating, lighting and ceiling installations or interior sculptures, all with acoustic properties,” she says, explaining how she works with sustainable materials such as compressed, recycled polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles or melamine foam.

In the hallway Aigner shows *Konfekt* her latest work, a commission by the luxury leather goods brand Hermès: a chaise longue on a grey marble-effect base, which will be upholstered in a range of fabrics. The base is made of sound-absorbing PET material but its structure gives it an impression of solidity and weight. Aigner has used melamine foam as filler for the cushions. “I called the first chaise longue I designed The Last Supper,” she says, laughing and pushing her long, straight hair back from her forehead.

Before we depart, to provide a glimpse of her current work in progress, she shows us a photograph of herself in her atelier, working on a piece of melamine foam with a hammer and chisel. The foam’s resemblance to a block of marble is uncanny. “I don’t really know where I’m going with this project,” she admits with a smile. Yet the end product will likely be something sculptural, sound-absorbing, utterly unpredictable – and appearing soon within this inventor-architect’s sumptuous and surprising home. — K



1. Dining table designed by Aigner
2. Aigner’s office
3. One of her finds
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5. First-floor gallery ceiling installation
6. Light-filled living room