

Vincent Van Duysen

Belgian architect Vincent Van Duysen is known for his elegant, understated, clean-lined architecture, interiors, and furniture. Since establishing his practice in Antwerp in 1989, he has designed everything from residences in Europe and Asia to the New York headquarters for the fashion house Loro Piana and the La Rinascente department store in Milan. He has also designed products for the Italian lighting company Flos, the Danish textile maker Kvadrat, the Italian ceramics firm Mutina, and the Italian furniture company Molteni&C, where he has been creative director since 2016.

When these photographs of Van Duysen's apartment in Antwerp were taken in 1996 for *Elle Decoration*, it was, almost unbelievably, the first time his work had been seen in print. His postindustrial space occupied the top floor of a former spice and rubber warehouse; its neutral colors and refined textures were perceptibly lighter in the kitchen and study, while the living room and bedroom were rendered in slightly darker tones and with more pronounced textures. Van Duysen retained the rough wood floors and exposed plumbing, conserving much of the apartment's historical footprint.

The repurposing of industrial buildings was nothing new in 1996, but Van Duysen's juxtapositions of serene monochromatic colors with authentic features and patinas were ahead of their time. The magazine feature also informed a new style of interior photography—relaxed and naturalistic, warmed by Van Duysen's informal presence (although his color-coordinated outfits were nothing if not flawless). The founding editor in chief of British *Elle Decoration*, Ilse Crawford, adopted the style as something of a template for future editorials.

The impact and influence of Van Duysen's apartment still resonate. In 2019 the *New York Times* included the living room on the *T Magazine* list of “The 25 Rooms That Influence the Way We Design,” alongside such iconic spaces as the vast living room in Cy Twombly's apartment in a seventeenth-century Roman palazzo; the beaux-arts reading room of Paris's Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, by Henri Labrouste; the salon of Pierre Chareau's Maison de Verre, also in Paris; and, of all places, Stonehenge. For Van Duysen, the apartment was home. “Design,” he says, “is my life, working every day, thinking and sketching in my mind, to share the beauty of the world. It is a process that never stops.”

Vincent Van Duysen's apartment, Antwerp, photographed in 1996.

*Pages 30–31:* Living room. *Pages 32–33:* Vincent Van Duysen with artwork by Alex Hartley. *Page 34:* Kitchen. *Page 35:* Vincent Van Duysen.

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1990s











