



The living area of the Beirut penthouse of architect Bernard Khoury features a bench by Hans Olsen, a sofa by Piero Lissoni for Living Divani, a side table of intersecting cubes by Nendo for Cappellini, cocktail tables by Warren Platner for Knoll, and, right, a Philippe Bestenheider armchair for Fratelli Boffi; the flooring is French oak. For details, see Resources.

TRIPLE PLAY

Atop a glass tower in Beirut, architect Bernard Khoury crafts a triplex for his family that merges an industrial aesthetic with wood, warmth, and wit

ELLE DECOR: What is your neighborhood like?

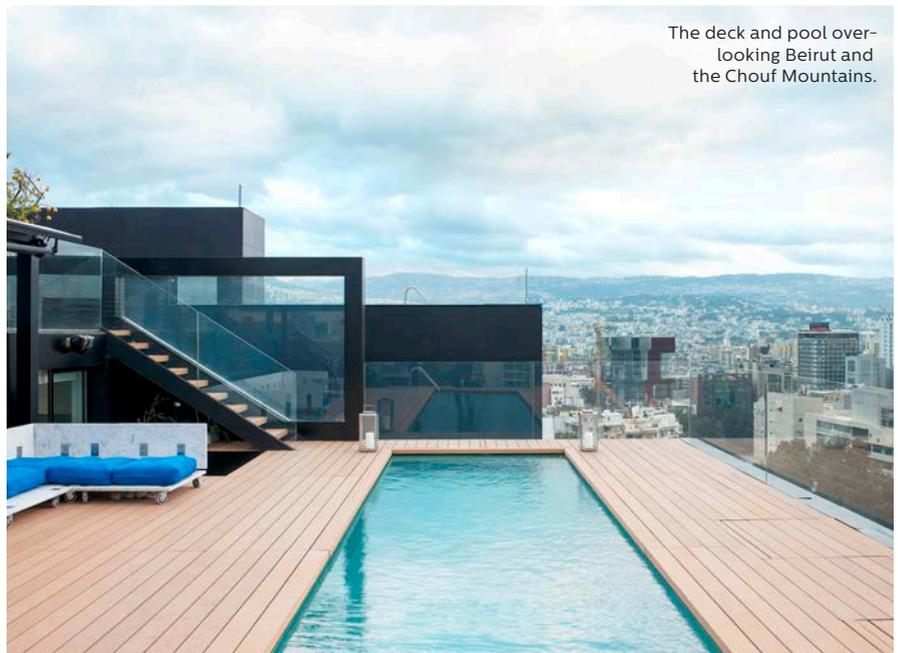
BERNARD KHOURY: We're located near Damascus Road, the line of demarcation between East and West Beirut during the war, which ended in 1990. It is a rare neighborhood in a city that is very densely built because it's so old. Our neighbors include low-rise historic buildings like the French embassy and the Maronite cemetery—lots of greenery and no additional buildings likely in the foreseeable future.

ED: How old is your building?

BK: We began the project when the developer came to me asking for my thoughts on the prospective location in 2008. We designed this building and the two adjacent, all of which were finished in 2013.

ED: Was the penthouse added after the building was completed?

BK: No, although it was designed so that it ▷



The deck and pool overlooking Beirut and the Chouf Mountains.



ABOVE: A leather swing by Karim Chaya for SpockDesign hangs from the bridge in the living area; the vintage leather armchair is by Ib Kofod-Larsen, the metal chair and ottoman are by Dögg & Arnved for Ligne Roset, and the plaster ceiling fixture conceals the air-conditioning ducts.

RIGHT: The kitchen features a Miele oven, Kartell stools, and a refrigerator and dishwasher by Smeg; the countertop and floor are marble. For details, see Resources.



Cane chairs by Hans Wegner and a side table by Giulio Cappellini in the living area.

would be separate from the main structure. Our home occupies the place of a penthouse, but it's more like a freestanding three-story house.

ED: Can you describe the layout?

BK: The first floor has a double-height combined living and dining area. It's 40 feet long and 20 feet high. There is a kitchen, of course, and the master suite. The second floor has two bedrooms and a bridge that wraps around the open area. The top level has guest accommodations, staff quarters, and the pool deck and terrace.

ED: How big is it altogether?

BK: The interior space is approximately 4,300 square feet. The decks and terraces add another 2,150 square feet of outdoor space.

ED: How did you choose what materials to use?

BK: I wanted to bring in the metal from the exterior of the building, which is clad in painted aluminum panels. And then I wanted to make use of a single wood in a variety of applications. I chose French oak. It's all-natural, just washed, not painted. I used that same wood throughout the house.

ED: What are your views like?

BK: They're wonderful. The main view, the one with the glass wall, looks toward the city instead of the sea, which is usually considered the choice panorama. But I prefer to look at the city. We can also see the Chouf Mountains in the distance. ▸



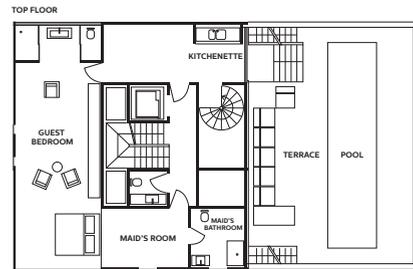
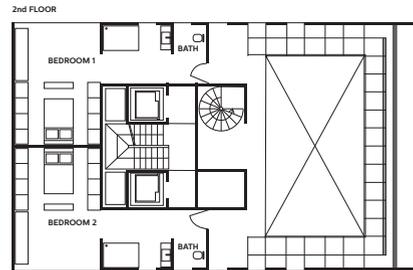
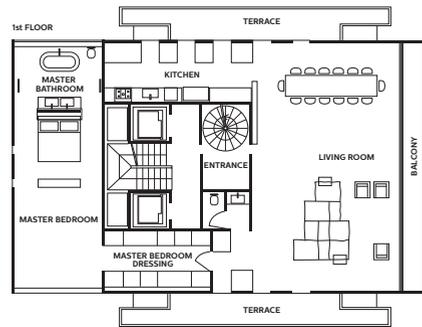
Khoury designed the oak dining table and shelving unit; the Hans Wegner cane chairs are from 1950.

WHAT THE PROS KNOW

- Despite his contractor's reluctance, Khoury had the French-oak flooring laid in sheets rather than individual planks. The sheets are made of a thick veneer of oak applied to high-density fiberboard. The seams gave Khoury a graphic grid that he followed up the living area's walls and across the ceiling.
- The custom-made cabinets in the main living space serve a variety of functions, including storage for and camouflage of the radiators and music system. They consist of multiple slats of French oak and are constructed with wheels for maximum flexibility and ease of access for repair and cleaning.

- Khoury used stone for the house's "wet" spaces. The countertops, backsplashes, and floor of the kitchen are marble. Around the tub in the master bath, Khoury installed a black stone that has no veining. The pool-deck material is a manufactured product crafted from recycled wood pressed in resin to make it waterproof; the custom pool furniture is marble on an aluminum frame.
- Khoury designed the dining table because the space was too narrow for a standard table. The couple's bed is also custom, so that it could be built into the headboard wall (the bathroom's double sinks back onto it). And the kitchen cabinets were actually more economical to build than to buy.

The floor plans.



ED: Is the window wall completely retractable?

BK: Yes, absolutely. And when it's open, you feel like you are walking outside, high above the city.

ED: Does it open automatically?

BK: It's manual, but the draperies are motorized, as are the shades on the outside of the windows. The sun can be brutal here at certain times of the year.

ED: Why do you have a swing in your living area?

BK: It was a gift from a friend, Karim Chaya. I've known him since we were students at the Rhode Island School of Design. He's an industrial designer, and he thought it would be wonderful suspended from the frame of the big window, but because we have children, we thought that was too dangerous. So we hung it from the bridge. At night, it's an amazing experience. It's like flying.

ED: What are some of the other quirky features of your home?

BK: We have a polished-aluminum table that's made from a single sheet of metal folded in the shape of a paper airplane. And the dining table, which I designed, is composed of two parallel pieces of oak that are inspired by airplane ▷



In the master bedroom, teak chairs by Finn Juhl, a cocktail table by Eero Saarinen for Knoll, and a console by USM; a light box photograph by Hiroyuki Masuyama hangs above the custom-made bed.

wings. They are even tapered from the center seam toward the outside edges.

ED: And the flying saucer on your ceiling?

BK: It hides the air-conditioning ducts. The equipment is state-of-the-art, but the process of creating the container was old-school craftsmanship. It was sculpted out of plaster and then painted black. It was a perverse decision of mine, because one usually associates plaster ceilings with ornate classical buildings, and they're always white. This piece was made by a man in his late 70s. It took him over a month, and nobody ever guesses that it's plaster.

ED: Why is using old-school craftsmen important?

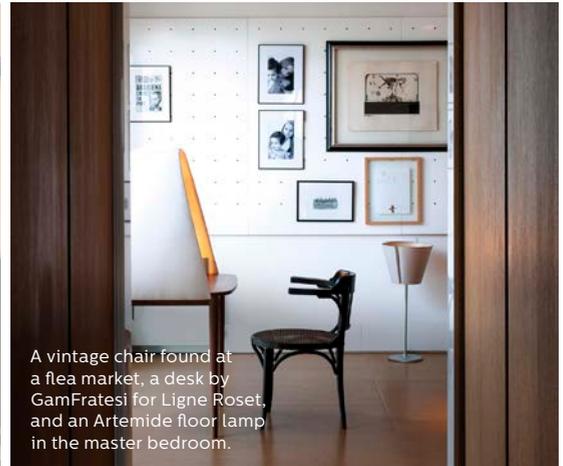
BK: They're a dying breed, unfortunately, because no one is learning what these incredibly talented elders know, and the quality of their work is unbelievable. The carpenter we used, Doumit Tannous, has been working with my family for three generations. He started as an apprentice in my grandfather's shop and went on to work for my father, Khalil Khoury, who was also an architect.

ED: Is the sensibility in the furniture another conscious homage to handcraft?

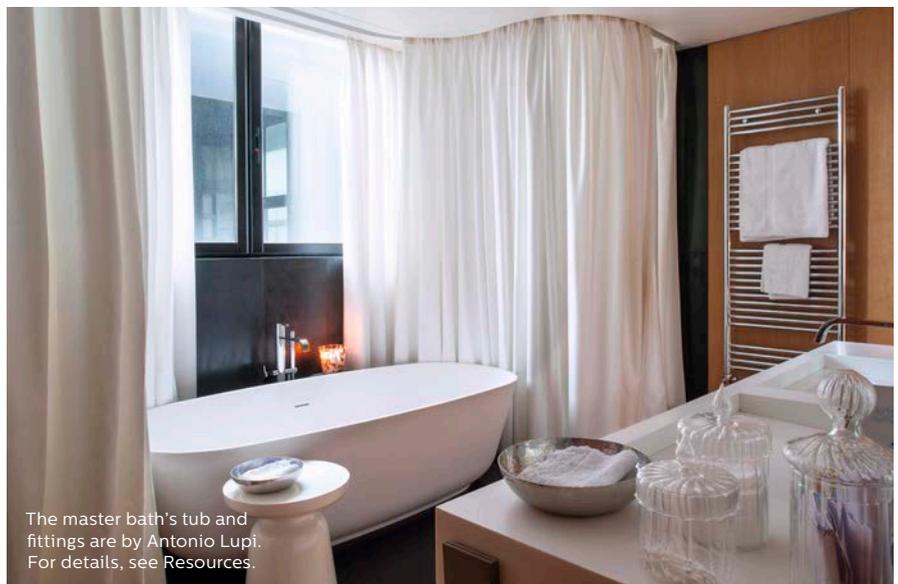
BK: Well, most of the furniture was collected by my wife, Nathalie, but a lot of it involves caning, bentwood, and weaving. And all-natural materials and textiles. The centerpiece of the room is the Piero Lissoni sectional, which is composed so you can face any direction, although most people choose to sit facing the window. I know I do. ■



French-oak paneling surrounds the metal staircase that rises to the top level.



A vintage chair found at a flea market, a desk by GamFratesi for Ligne Roset, and an Artemide floor lamp in the master bedroom.



The master bath's tub and fittings are by Antonio Lupi. For details, see Resources.