



(JORGE PARRA, SPAIN)

FADED GRANDEUR: Peeling back the layers of a scenographer's palatial suite.

WORDS Agnish Ray PHOTOS Marina Denisova

When he installed his apartment and studio in an 18th-century palace in the Madrid town of Aranjuez, the creative director and scenographer Jorge Parra had no interest in masterminding a contemporary revamp. Instead he chose to amplify the antique, sometimes crumbling history of the place. With peeling wallpaper, unfinished surfaces and a hodgepodge of furniture that testifies to the Spanish aesthete's eye for a good auction find, the home exudes eclectic opulence. Parra's pajama-inspired clothing label, House of Bows, encourages nostalgic dreams of days gone by and his decadent home invites visitors to indulge in the same.

AGNISH RAY: How'd you end up living here?

JORGE PARRA: The Medinaceli Palace was built in the mid-1700s. My ancestors were related to the Medinaceli family, so this palace came to them during a distribution of inheritance. When I returned to Madrid from living in Berlin, Oporto and Barcelona a few years ago, I set up my apartment in what were once the game rooms of the palace.

AR: Did you consider giving it a fresh, modern makeover?

JP: It's in a state of decay, which is what I like. I like things that are so beautiful that they remain beautiful even when they're dying; I want to preserve that eternal beauty. A new house doesn't interest me.

AR: How did you give the walls such incredible texture?

JP: I peeled away at years' worth of wallpaper by hand, using a spatula. I dampened the walls with hot water and as I took one layer off, there was another underneath, and another, until I was finally left with this. One of the wallpapers, with a fleur-de-lis pattern on it, must have been from the original palace.

AR: What else feels like it's crumbling?

JP: Some of the original window frames are half-broken and I love the cracked texture of the painted wood. In one of the rooms I had the ceiling painted: They did such a bad job, it was left peeling off but I loved it, so I left it like that. In summer, when it's hot, pieces sometimes fall off from above. My friends think I'm crazy, but when they come over they all agree that it looks great.

AR: If you're having people over, how do you set up the dining room?

JP: The table is laid with a classic white embroidered tablecloth, a vase with colorful flowers, porcelain dinnerware from Limoges and antique silver cutlery. The house smells like a mix of tobacco, jasmine and incense—aromas like oud, amber and palo santo.

AR: Who's your dream dinner guest?

JP: The American art collector Gertrude Stein.

AR: You're something of an art collector yourself. What are some of your highlight pieces?

JP: An original 1802 Goya print from his bullfighting series and two original sketches by the French playwright Jean Cocteau.

AR: Your tastes reflect a romantic gaze toward the past. Which era do you feel you most belong to in terms of style and design?

JP: I adore Palladian architecture. But I also love the 1920s which were an aesthetic revolution from start to finish, with Bauhaus as the icing on the cake.

AR: You inherited the property from your family. Is the theme of inheritance reflected in the decor?

JP: Yes, I inherited lots of the furniture, like an 18th-century Louis XVI-style writing desk made of palo santo wood, which smells incredible. My grandmother used to keep lots of inherited pieces as well as antiques bought in France and Belgium, so I've been obsessed with furniture since I was little, particularly seats.

AR: Where do you most like to sit?

JP: On a 19th-century green-and-white chaise with original silk upholstery, which I keep in the reading room; I got it from my friends' interiors studio, Casa Josephine.

AR: Why do you think you steer toward old, inherited and found pieces?

JP: Because antique handmade pieces have a soul. An artisan made that stool by hand, so it has an energetic significance; it's important to show it deference.



(below) Alongside running his fashion label, House of Bows, Parra works as a scenographer. The two passions often collide; several decorative items in his apartment, such as the papier-mâché Salvador Dali bust on page 164, were originally props for *Monsieur JPL*—a short promotional movie he created for the brand.

