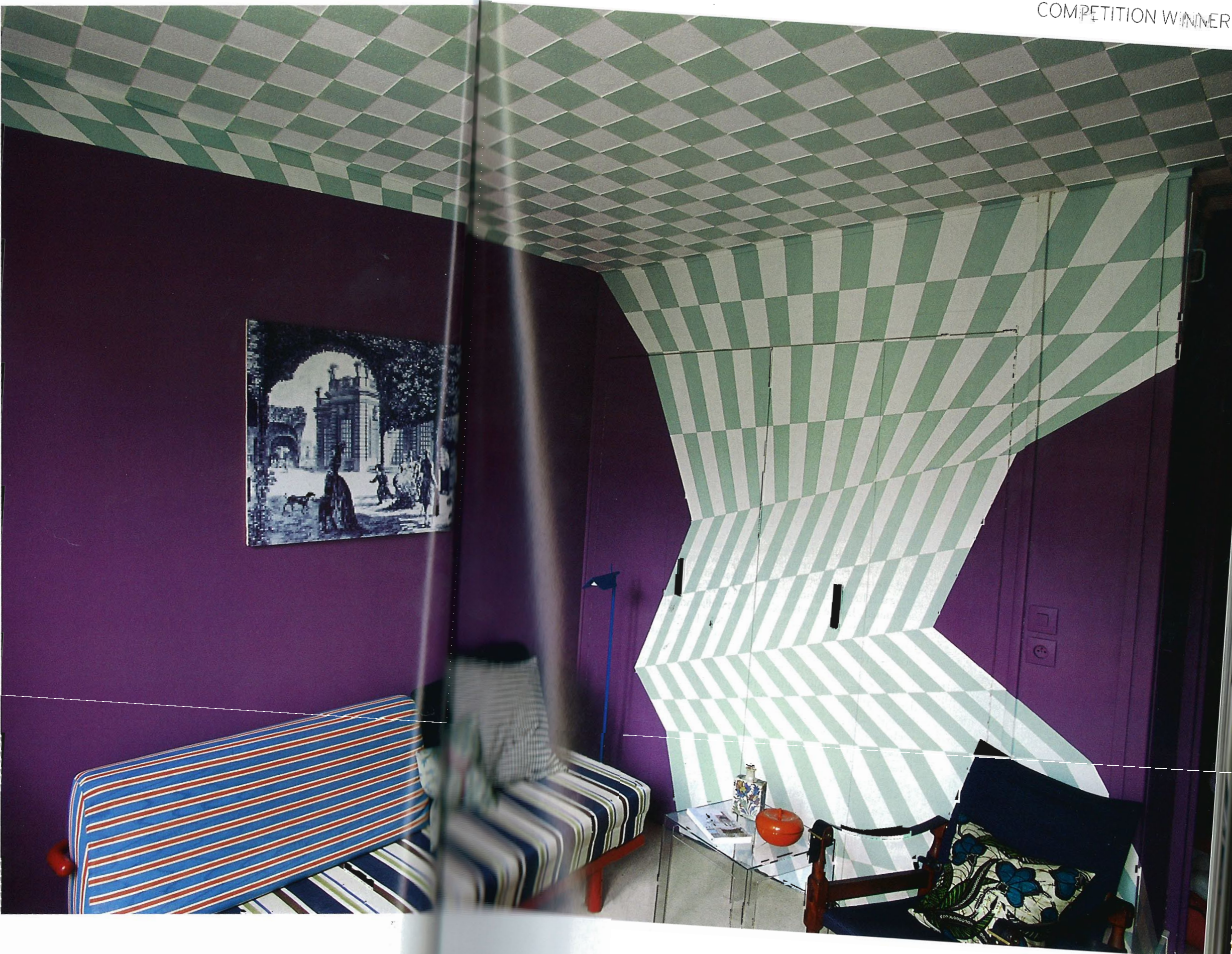




OP-ART OPUS

IN OUR APRIL ISSUE WE ASKED READERS TO GET INTO COMPETITIVE MODE AND SEND IN PHOTOGRAPHS OF A ROOM THEY HAD CREATED. MANY DESIGNS BEGUILLED THE EYE, BUT ONE ESPECIALLY DAZZLED THE JUDGES. *THE WORLD OF INTERIORS* EDITOR RUPERT THOMAS INVITES YOU TO CHECK OUT THE WINNING ENTRY. PHOTOGRAPHY: ERIC MORIN ▷



Top: Xavier Fenouil emerges from the galley kitchen in his Paris flat. Right: Xavier began the room scheme by colouring the walls purple. Painting the existing ceiling tiles and geometric wall shape came later - 'It took one week to do it,' he says. An 18th-century drawing he manipulated and printed hangs above a Muji sofa - painted red and reupholstered by Xavier

COMPETITION WINNER



THIS JUDGING LARK is more tricky than you might imagine. Your heart could almost go out to Simon Cowell. And that's not an opinion I would commit readily to print had I not recently experienced the arduous process myself.

But our April competition – to submit for scrutiny a room you had created – unleashed something of a tidal wave of entries. The combined prize of having the winning scheme splashed over these very pages and of taking up a £20,000 interior-design course at the prestigious KLC School of Design proved irresistible to hundreds of readers. I gave up counting the applications after the 278th.

Not that the photographs we'd requested of people's most prized spaces exactly flooded in to start with. Even the word 'trickle' wouldn't describe the occasional envelope that arrived at the office to swim in lonely isolation at the bottom of a tea crate marked 'Competition Entries'. But a rapidly approaching deadline prompted a flurry of activity, with registered packages winging their way to us from as near as Brighton and as far off as Bangalore. That's to say nothing of the mild hysteria caused by the eruption of Iceland's Eyjafjallajökull volcano. To international readers, the nightmare endured by families stranded abroad due to grounded flights was as nothing compared to not being able to post their pictures. The boys in Vogue House's basement mail room, who uncomplainingly deliver post throughout the building, almost lost their sense of humour with all the extra packages they had to cart up to us on the second floor.

Three (full) tea crates later, I began the task of actually looking at the submissions. This turned out to be as physically exhausting as it was daunting. (*Wol* readers, I can report, have a particular fondness for Sello-tape.) But packages opened, it was inspiring and oddly humbling to see how much time and care so many had lavished on this competition. I would like to thank all concerned for taking it so much to heart.

Stylistically, the entries themselves were as varied and as surprising as you might expect for a magazine such as this. Here was everything from rooms done on a shoestring to those put together with budgetary abandon; from the chintz-and-swags traditional to the eye-poppingly contemporary. Yet each one was a highly individual portrait of its creator and offered a privileged peek into his or her unique world.

But, as they say, there can only be one winner. So once I had whittled down my initial selection, KLC principal Jenny Gibbs and I set about selecting that lucky individual. And here he is: 34-year-old Xavier Fenouil.

Granted, the chequerboard-painted walls and ceiling of Xavier's Paris flat may not be to everyone's taste. But both Jenny and I were firmly impressed by the ambitious scale of his scheme. The sweeping Op-Art-like form entirely transforms the small 1970s apartment into something dramatic and original. It also niftily disguises doors that conceal a galley kitchen. 'I want to play with the perception of space. To give height and depth to the walls,' Xavier explains. 'Like Alice falling into the White Rabbit's hole, the walls turn into ceiling, the ceiling expands down the walls...' The use of purple and the upholstery (all of which was done by Xavier) are pretty punchy, too. Even if you won't be trying this at home, I think you'll concede that it's a splendidly committed bit of design.

Having studied architecture at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris La Villette, Xavier is not exactly a stranger to spatial thinking. But he is a newcomer to the world of interior design. He should thrive at KLC and I look forward to seeing how he brings a radical flourish to the disciplines he learns there. Perhaps this won't be the last time his work appears in our pages ■

From top: the kitchen is neatly concealed behind folding doors; Focquette the Jack Russell sleeps on cushions beneath Xavier's drawing board, on which are some of his architectural models; Xavier found his desk chair in the street and has covered it in satin and 'bound' it with fluorescent-pink elastic. Pink, too, are his wool curtains, though their black-and-white taffeta edging provides a contrast in colour and texture