

# ELLE DECOR

summer chic

what's in store



Clockwise from bottom center: Designer Catherine Memmi at her new shop in Manhattan's SoHo. Memmi's Rive Gauche platform bed dressed in black linens. Handmade ceramics. Rive Gauche oak dining table. Lounge leather armchair and sofa. Madison leather armchair and a stack of leather pillows. See Resources.

## Catherine Memmi

Americans have been begging the French home-furnishings designer for years to open a boutique Stateside. The wait is over

A low-slung platform bed is made up with military precision in crisp dark linens. Plump oatmeal-hued pillows are perfectly arranged on a long leather sofa. And a sleek oak dining table is set for eight with an arrangement of startling chartreuse lilies placed at its center. If it wasn't for a salesperson discreetly replenishing shelves with candles and one-off ceramic bowls and vases, Catherine Memmi's new 3,300-square-foot store in New York's SoHo—her first in the U.S.—could easily pass for the home of a neat-as-a-pin minimalist. Correction, make that neominimalist.

"Pure minimalism is too cold for me," says Memmi, the French furniture and accessories designer who spearheaded the sparse but luxurious style more than a decade ago. Since opening her first eponymous store in Paris in 1993, Memmi has become known for creating simply contoured pieces in fine materials and a strict palette of black, white, gray, sand, brown, and a shade of green she calls "the color of leaves."

Much like her shops in Paris, Deauville, London, and Tokyo, Memmi's latest temple to harmonious living—a lofty space on Greene Street that includes two floors, a mezzanine, and a patio—showcases her wares in a series of vignettes that invite fellow neominimalists (especially those who can't resist the lure of an eight-foot white leather sofa) to move right in. Deep chairs upholstered in linen and cotton look right as can be around streamlined wenge-wood, sycamore, and oak tables. "I like using rustic materials in a modern context," she says.

Completing the picture are glass shelves lined with Memmi's signature candles, room sprays, and bath and beauty products in evocative scents like *sable ambré* (amber sand) and *concombre* (cucumber), which until now were available only at a handful of shops in the U.S. "For years Americans came into my stores around the world and asked me when I was opening in the States," says Memmi. "I was waiting until everything was just right." **MARK WELSH**



