PARISIAN-BORN INTERIOR DESIGNER DELPHINE KRAKOFF OPENS THE DOORS TO HER ART-FILLED NEW YORK TOWNHOUSE

By Anne Monoky


Photographs by Douglas Friedman

If one wanted to judge a book by its cover, it would be hard to peg the darling and endearing Delphine Krakoff at first glance. Which is to say that while she is French, demure, and lovely to a T, there’s also a dauntlessness that indicates she’s not to be messed with. It’s the kind of Mrs. Smith duality that allows her to run multiple marathons and climb scaffolding in her job at the helm of an interior-design company and yet play perfect wife and mother every night, whipping up dinner for her husband, Reed Krakoff, the creative honcho at Coach and designer of his own eponymous label, and their children. “Like most modern working women, my day goes in many different directions,” Delphine says. “It’s usually chaotic, but now it starts early because I am training for the marathon—I’ve run three already—so I’m usually in Central Park by 5:30 in the morning.”

All of that would be impressive on its own—but then there is the house that leaves even seen-it-all fashion folk agog. The Krakoffs inhabit a seven-floor Upper East Side townhouse that was formerly 12 separate apartments. Refinished in 2008 in tandem with architect Mark Ferguson, it’s now filled with a fine-tuned assemblage of art and furniture. There are pieces from Louise Nevelson, Robert Motherwell, and Joseph Beuys, names usually tossed about in museums, not homes. “We only buy things that to us are extraordinary,” Delphine says. Overhead, an Alexander Calder mobile gently flutters in the breeze, while sunlight glints off of a silver Marc Newson chair. Each piece is a carefully considered mission she’s carried out with her husband.

Prior to establishing Pammelouse Design in 2000, Delphine worked as an accessories designer. Her first jobs were in Paris at Louis Vuitton and Dior. She eventually relocated to New York for
In the master bedroom are an Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann vanity, a 1930s-era bed by Jean-Michel Frank, a table by Marc Newson, and Claude Lalanne's La Pomme Bouche apples. (on the mantel).

Reed Krakoff sweater, skirt, bangles, and sandals.

The upstairs sitting room features a mirrored mantel by Serge Roche, circa 1930, which he made for his own private residence. Emilio Pucci pillows offer a spot of color.
a job at Coach, where she met her future spouse, and then landed at Polo Ralph Lauren. While there, she turned an interior-design hobby into a career. "My first paid client said, "You know, I'm going to give you a chance, and if you do well, you will have a career, and if you do a crappy job, nobody will hear about it." That was true!"

It was a gamble that paid off. Delphine curates all of the couple's homes, which include a former Bouvier estate in East Hampton and a modern manse in Palm Beach, as well as those of a few carefully selected Pamplemousses clients. "I'm serious about what I do, and when you work on a big townhouse for a family, they're part of your life pretty heavily for two years," she says. "If you don't like them, that's not good!"

Fellow tastemaker Simon Doonan, of Barneys New York, a regular dinner guest chez Krakoff, testifies to her fully realized aesthetic. "It is always such a treat to go to the Krakoffs' because, apart from Delphine being very stylish herself, she is also an amazing decorator," he says.

Delphine's appreciation for design can be attributed to her father, a politician, and her mother, who was a curator for the city of Paris. The fifth child in a family of eight, she and her siblings frequented the Louvre and the Centre Pompidou. "My parents were entertaining a lot, my mother was this great cook, and they always had dinners once a week with the craziest mix of politicians and artists. That's what I grew up around."

In her free time, Delphine shares her family's impressive culinary skill set with her children while stylishly embodying a look of understated French chic. It is a vision realized by her husband's label. "He really speaks to a working mom, and it just works with my lifestyle," she says. "What's funny is that I was never much of a shopper myself, and Reed would actually shop for me. He would find things I would never have picked, and they would be perfect. He was sort of my personal shopper."

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