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FRIEDMAN BENDA 515 W 26TH STREET NEW YORK NY 10001

FRIEDMANBENDA.COM TELEPHONE 212 239 8700 FAX 212 239 8760

In the living area of a Manhattan apartment designed by Robert Couturier, the custom-made sofa sits on a Corian base, the lamp is by Hervé Van der Straeten, and the bronze cocktail table is by Hubert le Gall; the Crochet chair is by Marcel Wanders, the marble Cumulus tables are by Joris Laarman, and a 1960s Paul Tuttle chair is upholstered in an Élitis velvet. See Resources.



A Mod, Mod World

A clean, well-lighted space in a Manhattan tower gives Robert Couturier the chance to put a contemporary spin on his

TEXT BY TIM MCKEOUGH · PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON SCHMIDT · PRODUCED BY ANITA SARSIDI



trademark flair for luxury



When Robert Couturier began designing the interior of an apartment in a midtown Manhattan skyscraper, his client expressed one primary desire. "She wanted something ultracontemporary, because she had done everything else," Couturier says. The Polish businessman's wife had previously overseen the design of a number of the family's other homes in Europe. "They have incredibly beautiful houses," says Couturier. "They have one in Warsaw, another by a lake in the Polish countryside, a place in Geneva, a place in Sardinia, and a boat. Each reflects a different side of her personality."

But the client envisioned her Manhattan home as "the modern one," he says. A mutual friend put her in touch with Couturier. While the decorator is known as a master of mixing periods and styles, he was thrilled to push his work in a new direction. "Although what I usually do is very different from what she wanted, she recognized that I have a demanding eye and a knowledge of design," he says. "I always love and welcome a challenge. There is nothing more boring than repeating oneself over and over again." Couturier drew much of his inspiration from the personal style of the client herself. "There is something simple yet incredibly sophisticated about her that I felt immediately at ease with and that I wanted to translate into her home," he explains.

The client and her husband visit New York only occasionally, notes Couturier, and had one other wish. Their daughter is attending college in the U.S., and they use New York as a meeting place. The 4,500-square-foot space needed to incorporate both an appropriately chic apartment for the visiting parents and a separate suite for the daughter. Beyond those basic requirements, the client gave Couturier full creative license.

Stepping through the apartment's entrance, it's immediately apparent that Couturier has delivered,

A Laarman table, an Aqua Creations light fixture, and a marble sculpture by Pascal Haudressy in the dining area; a collage by César hangs above a pair of Poltrona Frau chairs. **FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** The living area screen is by Peter Lane, and the rug is by Rosemary Hallgarten. A Mattia Bonetti lamp beside a console by Aranda/Lasch in the dining area; the large painting is by Wojciech Fangor. In the entry, the painting above Nendo's Cabbage chair is by Henryk Stazewski, and the mirror is by Van der Straeten; the floors are bleached oak. See Resources.





with great zeal, on his client's request for a contemporary look. Pristine white walls, light wood flooring, and reflective surfaces set off a dramatic collection of cutting-edge art, before giving way to a wall of sunny windows overlooking Central Park and the Upper East Side. But the design isn't only about providing a singular, breathtaking moment. Making the most of the apartment's unconventional layout—its diagonal walls and corners that terminate at odd angles—Couturier designed an interior that slowly reveals itself, with frequent shifts in color, texture, and mood.

The main living space, which is defined by a skeletal floor-to-ceiling ceramic screen designed by Peter Lane, has the cool, open feel of a gallery. When Couturier first met his client, he recalls, "She was dressed all in white, with a blond bob and not one hair out of place." He wanted the apartment's public spaces to reflect her "very controlled look," he says. Of course, any decent gallery needs stunning works—in this case, it's a museum-worthy selection of contemporary furnishings, including limited-edition pieces by Aranda/Lasch, Joris Laarman,



The study's Alessandro Albrizzi desk is paired with a 1970s Brazilian chair, the custom-made daybed is upholstered in a Clarence House velvet, and the table is by Pouenat Ferronnier; the artwork is by Edward Krasinski, the curtains are of a laser-cut microsuede, and the rug is alpaca. **FACING PAGE, FROM TOP:** The master bedroom's walls are covered in a velvet by Sahco, and lamps by Mauro Fabbro flank a custom-made bed upholstered in a Rubelli velvet. The wall panels in the master bedroom's sitting area evoke the New York City skyline; a desk by Nicolas Aubagnac holds a Tamara de Lempicka drawing, the chair is by Archirivolto, and the floor lamp is by Philippe Hiquily. See Resources.





and Marcel Wanders. One could imagine a collector lovingly acquiring them over the years, but that was not the case here. "We found everything in two days in Paris and two days in New York," says Couturier. "It was loads of fun, because she's very decisive and very quick."

The feel of the space changes dramatically upon entering the master bedroom. There, the materials and color palette create a cozy, cocoon-like environment. Walls are covered with pleated velvet. Furniture and accessories feature patinated metals, dark woods, and gold accents. Most striking is a series of doors and wall panels depicting the New York skyline, made from liquid metals and resins, which adds an Art Deco touch to the room.

Each of the other private rooms has a distinct personality. "In some projects, people don't want that," says Couturier. "They want them all to be the same. But I think this is more fun—especially when you have so many rooms." The study, for instance, is grounded in black and white but enlivened with pops of mustard-yellow. Even the five bathrooms and two powder rooms cater to different moods, from cool and modern to playful and glamorous.

Couturier believes the apartment's mix of furnishings is an ideal reflection of his client's diverse interests and world travels. "She's incredibly chic and elegant—when she visits, she comes with six Vuitton suitcases," he says. "I think it's rare that an apartment is such a perfect fit." ■

