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the
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A PERFECT FIT

Thanks to designer Ellie Cullman, Susanne and Bill Pritchard's Manhattan pied-à-terre is a comfortable setting for gathering their growing family and a dashing showcase for their expansive collection of art

By Vicky Lowry Photography by Joshua McHugh Styled by Helen Crowther

In the New York City living room of Susanne and Bill Pritchard, a Mark di Suvero sculpture perches on a Maison Leleu table while an abstract canvas by Christopher Wool (left) and Robert Rauschenberg's *Rumor (Spread)* (1980) are mounted on custom-paneled walls. Ferguson & Shamamian oversaw the apartment's architectural renovation, while Cullman & Kravis Associates masterminded the decor. The rug is a Christian Bérard design for La Manufacture Cogolin, specially made through The Crave Collective. For details see Sources.



Custom-made pendants by Charles Burnand hang in the central gallery, where Ferguson & Shamamian created a mosaic marble floor. A Jeff Koons work is displayed above a sideboard made by Charles Burnand in the style of Marc du Plantier. Works by Jackson Pollock and Damien Hirst overlook a bespoke bench by Anthony Lawrence-Belfair, while a Lee Krasner watercolor is visible through the doorway.

PEOPLE SWITCH APARTMENTS IN NEW YORK CITY FOR ALL KINDS OF REASONS.

They desire more space or crave better light and views. Sometimes they just want a change of scenery. Susanne and Bill Pritchard, a Houston-based couple whose jewel-box pied-à-terre had served them well for a decade, happened to love their Upper East Side neighborhood, but they—and their art—had outgrown their quarters.

With four adult children and incoming grandchildren, the couple set their sights on a larger residence where the family could spend time together. Plus, their ballooning collection of Abstract Expressionist and contemporary works required a lot more wall space.

For help the Pritchards turned to their longtime designer and trusted aesthete, Ellie Cullman. A founding partner of the firm Cullman & Kravis Associates, she had handled the decoration of their Texas residence and Manhattan apartment, as well as offices for Bill, a geologist in the oil and gas business. It was Cullman who found the couple's new address, a 4,500-square-foot, high-floor unit in a 1937 Art Deco building by Rosario Candela, the preeminent prewar residential architect. "It's my favorite building in New York," Cullman declares.

Renovations of the interiors, which hadn't been touched in decades, were conceived as a contemporary interpretation of Art Deco, with Nelson Rockefeller's art-filled Fifth Avenue home, boldly decorated by Jean-Michel Frank, providing inspiration. The architecture firm Ferguson & Shamamian updated the spaces in pitch-perfect style. Staff quarters were commandeered for a large guest room—the apartment now has four en suite bedrooms—and what had been a compartmentalized kitchen was transformed into an inviting eat-in spot. Oak panels, some with intricate inlaid patterns, were artfully deployed from floor to ceiling in the living room.

"The large panels were designed to accommodate the artworks and give the room an airy feel," explains Mark Ferguson, the principal architect. "It's a way of tailoring a classic treatment to have a more contemporary look."

A photograph the Pritchards took of a floor in Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum was the launching pad for the graphic geometric-pattern marble flooring in the gallery. That central space connects the main living areas, and the doorways aren't completely symmetrical, which adds complexity to the configuration. "Making it look ordered and effortless was a challenge," Ferguson admits.



ABOVE: Over the living room fireplace, a painting by Anne Truitt is flanked by an Osvaldo Borsani mirror from the 1950s and a replica made by Alexander Cohane; the Maison Jansen-style armchairs are by Anthony Lawrence-Belfair. BELOW: An André Derain painting presides over the dining room, where an Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann-inspired light fixture by Charles Burnand is installed above the custom-made table, with a faux-porphry top, a set of 1936 André Sornay chairs, and a rug by Scott Group Studio.



“WHEN THEY WERE NEW TO COLLECTING ART, THEY WANTED A PALE ENVELOPE,” SAYS ELLIE CULLMAN. “NOW THEY WANT COLOR”



In the library, walls with panels of faux shagreen by Uriu Nuance host a Günther Förg painting. The vintage lamps are from Niall Smith, and the rug is by Doris Leslie Blau. ABOVE: The primary suite's four-poster bed, dressed with E. Braun & Co. linens and a bedspread by Anthony Lawrence-Belfair, was designed by Cullman & Kravis, as were the nightstands, topped by Roberto Giulio Rida lamps from Bernd Goeckler, which also supplied the room's 1820 Austrian chandelier. A Gerhard Richter painting is mounted over the bed, and a Milton Avery still life hangs between the windows.



Cullman's previous decorating schemes for the Pritchards have featured neutral backdrops to spotlight the collection that the art patrons—she is a trustee at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and he at the Menil Foundation—have amassed over the past decade and a half. This time around, however, exuberant hues prevailed. “When they were new to collecting abstract art, they wanted a pale envelope,” Cullman says. “Now they want color.”

Working with her firm's longtime associates Alyssa Urban and Katie Sutton, Cullman traced the original Rockefeller rug back to Cogolin, the French company that made the residence's floral rugs, designed by fashion illustrator Christian Bérard. A color-splotched reproduction with a lemon-yellow background sets a joyous tone in the living room, beneath large-scale artworks by Christopher Wool and Robert Rauschenberg. “It's bold, it's exquisite,” Ferguson says of the setting. “Your eye has a lot to look at, and each piece plays a role.”

Cullman commissioned numerous custom furnishings, including period-inspired lighting by the London studio of Charles Burnand. In the dining room, the firm crafted the light fixture in alabaster and patinated bronze that hangs above the mahogany table with a faux-porphry top and elegant 1930s André Sornay chairs upholstered in gold leather. “They didn't want everybody's brown table with a pedestal,” Cullman recalls. Presiding over the room's glamorous furnishings is one of the Pritchards' masterpieces, André Derain's circa-1913 painting *La Cène*, a modernist interpretation of Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*.

“The furnishings and finishes are part of the collection,” Cullman says. “Our goal was to design a dynamic envelope commensurate with their outstanding art.” Her clients' aim, meanwhile, was just as succinct. “Our desire is to never have to remodel,” says Susanne. “Cullman & Kravis interiors don't go out of style.” □