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Women's Fashion  
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# BACK

Fashion for  
a grand  
re-entrance

# THE FUTURE IS



ON A QUIET BLOCK in Manhattan's East 40s, the 18-story Beaux Arts apartment complex is one of the city's understated architectural gems, designed in 1929 by the prominent New York architects Raymond Hood and Kenneth Murchison. Originally intended to offer residential and studio spaces for Midtown's burgeoning community of artists, it consists of twin structures built across the street from each other with Art Deco-style facades of limestone, brick and steel.

The 33-year-old Canadian interior designer Martin Brûlé discovered the Beaux Arts five years ago while hunting for a home base in New York after years of living between the city, Miami, Paris and Montreal. He was immediately transfixed. "I'm obsessed with the '20s and '30s," says Brûlé, who often incorporates early 20th-century motifs into his work: streamlined but sumptuous materials and finishes like velvet, lacquer and polished wood; monochrome hues and geometric patterns; and bold period furniture. "For me, Art Deco was a harbinger of Modernism that has never really been equaled."

When Brûlé first saw the apartment, a 1,300-square-foot space on the 14th floor, the entrance was a cramped passageway

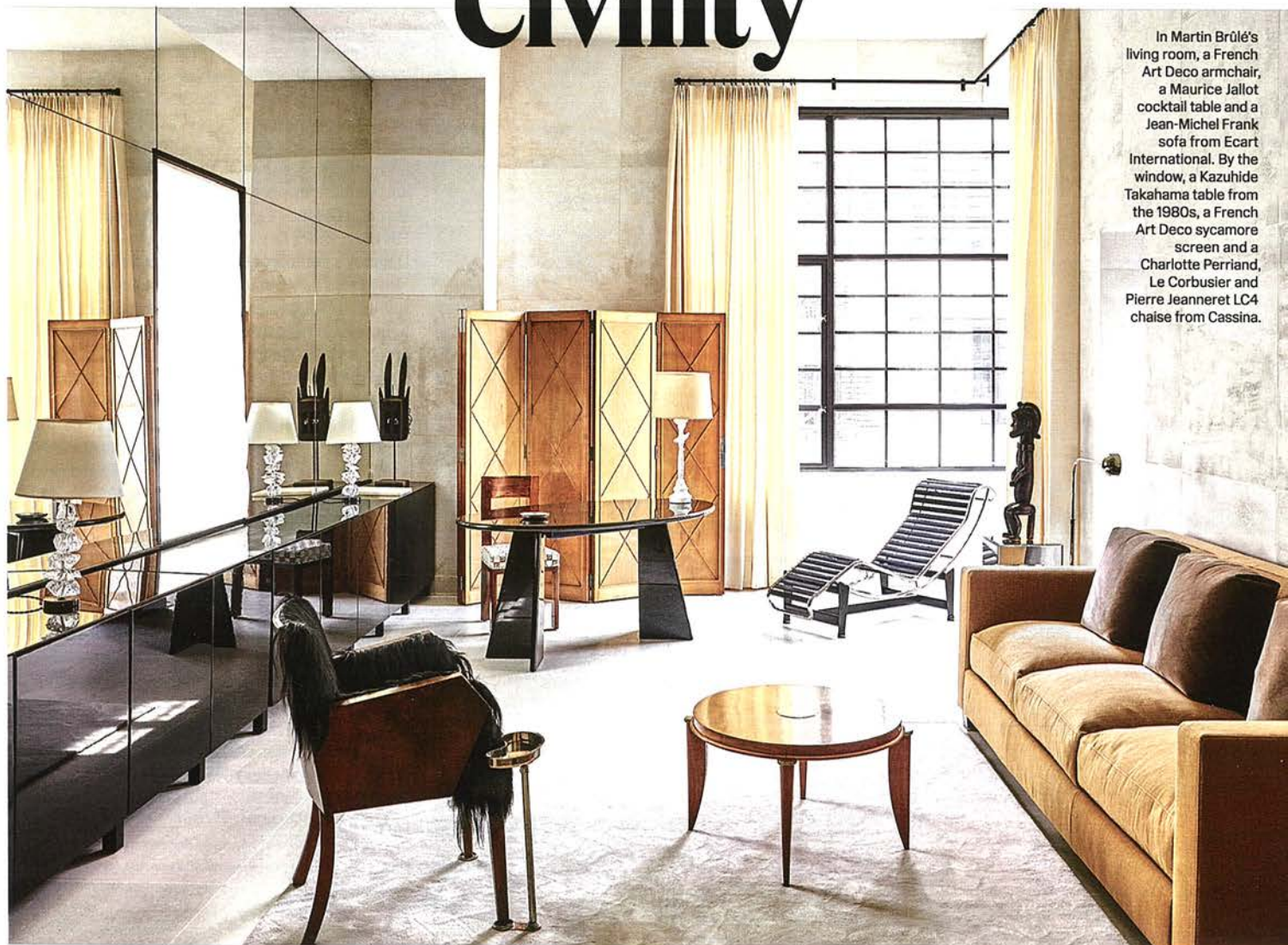
**Inside one of Manhattan's early Art Deco buildings, a designer has created an understated tribute to Jazz Age New York—and his own pioneering vision.**

By Tom Delavan  
Photographs by Angela Hau

that led to a kitchen covered in Formica ("very '90s Home Depot," he says) followed by a small sitting room intercepted by awkward soffits. But at the end of that sitting room was a single large casement window that, if you stood at the correct angle, perfectly framed the iconic steel spire of the Chrysler Building, built at the same time as the Beaux Arts. Brûlé signed the lease that day.

In undoing some of the apartment's more undesirable features, Brûlé found the freedom to experiment, creating a respite that recalls not only New York's Jazz Age but the '80s-era reinterpretation of Art Deco, which blended minimalism with monochromatic flair. He hid the two bedrooms' scuffed parquet floors with velvety wool carpet—chocolate brown in one room and creamy ivory in the other—and painted the walls to match. He stuccoed and decorated the main living room-cum-dining room's walls with a faux rusticated finish that suggests a mix of limestone, parchment and travertine and whose gravitas makes the soffits appear intentional. Perhaps most dramatically, he ripped out the Formica in the kitchen and replaced it with discreet brushed stainless-steel cabinets and a polished black granite countertop. He then tucked a Smeg oven and Miele

# The Rules of Civility



In Martin Brûlé's living room, a French Art Deco armchair, a Maurice Jallot cocktail table and a Jean-Michel Frank sofa from Ecart International. By the window, a Kazuhide Takahama table from the 1980s, a French Art Deco sycamore screen and a Charlotte Perriand, Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret LC4 chaise from Cassina.





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cooktop into a closet at the north end of the living room, closest to the kitchen, which he concealed with floor-to-ceiling off-white *drap de laine* curtains. It may look too elegant to be practical, but Brûlé in fact often hosts dinners for 15 around a rare eight-foot-long '20s Art Deco bronze-and-marble gueridon table purchased from his former employer, the interior designer and antiques dealer Jean-Paul Beaujard.

THE MAIN ROOM itself is divided into two parts: The half closest to the kitchen is anchored by the marble gueridon, which Brûlé has raised on mover's dollies so it can be rolled around the room for dinners or a meeting (the apartment also doubles as his office). On the west wall, a small 1948 Josef Albers painting that hangs over the fireplace serves as the space's only splash of color; nearby, an ornate Carlo Bugatti Mosque chair and a 1926 rosewood-and-parchment secretaire decorate a niche. The other half of the room, which overlooks the street, is his living area. The east wall is lined with low black lacquered Ikea cabinets that extend the full length of the room. They complement a 1980s Antella wood table by Kazuhide Takahama that Brûlé uses as a desk.

The space's focal point is a '90s LC4 chaise by Charlotte Perriand, Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, positioned in front of that 10-foot-high casement window, which is flanked by curtain panels of ivory raw silk. "When I was growing up, that chair was the most basic thing in the world," Brûlé says. And while it's true that the chaise has almost become a cliché of contemporary interior design, in the context of Brûlé's home one sees it anew, and is able to appreciate its bold functionality. "Certain pieces have more presence, and you need to give them space," he explains.

But it's Brûlé's bedroom that's the most intimate (and revealing) space in the apartment. At first glance it is modest: a mattress on the floor with white sheets, a lone oak chair by its side. But the sheets were custom-made for Brûlé at a mill in Italy, the pillows are of the finest Canadian goose down and the chair is a rare Carlo Bugatti from 1906: everything simple, but chosen with care. It's how Brûlé designs, as well. "What I love most," he says, "is an opulence that is almost invisible." ▣

Left: in the dining area, a Josef Albers painting from 1948 hangs above a Karl Springer parchment stool. Below: Brûlé tucked a Smeg oven and a Miele cooktop in a closet near the kitchen, and styled it with a drawing by Pablo Picasso, vintage Van Day Truex for Baccarat crystal and floor-to-ceiling wool curtains.

