FANTASY ISLAND

A sprawling apartment in a legendary Fifth Avenue hotel becomes a family home that marries European decadence with American ease.

By Alexa Brazilian Photographs by Christopher Sturman





In a pine-paneled room used for parties in a Manhattan apartment, a Turkish-style sofa by the interior designer Martin Brild that he had upholstered in a custom-colored silk velvet from Dedar. The games table is Melson Jansen, and the cerpet is from Codimat Collection. "IT HAS THE spirit of a loft," says the interior designer Martin Brûtê, surveying the apartment that inhabits an entire floor of the Sherry-Netherland, the 38-story Jazz Age Fifth Avenue co-op and hotel overlooking Central Park at 59th Street. "The stereotype of a New York loft is that it's downtown with this artsy feeling, mismatched furniture. Well, this space has all those elements, it's just a completely dreamy version of that."

The Montreal-born Brule, 38, was commissioned to do the apartment in 2021, a few years after he opened his namesake New York office, by a Latin American-born client with a family of five who works in a rarefied corner of the international jewelry business. Brûlé has since transformed the II,000 square feet, which once housed the hotel's barbershop, gym and several offices, into a wildly imaginative and distinctively uptown version of open-plan living. With vast spaces separated mainly by three monumental sets of custom-forged, nickel-plated steel pocket doors, its free-flowing layout is arrayed with finely crafted 18th- and 19th-century European antiques. Modernist furniture from the 1930s and '40s and a vivid pastiche of intensely colored velvets. silks and satins. The heart of the space is an airy, sophisticated sitting room that connects on the south side to a dining room suggestive of decadent late night suppers in postwar Paris, and an industrial-inflected kitchen. A sensuous lounge and screening room lead to a celestial primary suite and an adjoining boudoir on the north side.

For Brûlé, who is known for subdued tones and disciplined geometries. invoking a TriBeCa loft within an iconic neo-Gothic edifice and outfitting it in a fever dream of color, texture and opulent labrics was a change of direction. The client, with whom he traveled to calleries and antiques shops in France and Italy, wanted the furnishings to elicit "happy and bright" feelings - and to be exquisitely wrought. "I was open to do anything in the world," Brûlé says.

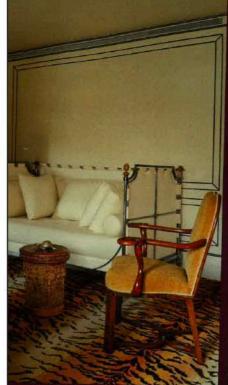
One of his inspirations for the décor was a group of socialities and aesthetes who lived in Paris after World War II, among them the Cuban sugar heir and designer Emilio Terry and the Chilean collector Arturo Lopez-Willshaw, whose stylish younger lover, the Baron de Redé, restored the Baroque-era Hotel Lambert on the He Saint-Louis and later helped manage money for the Rolling Stones. They were omnivorous tangerine by the contemporary Swiss

and unconcerned with propriety - or artist Urs Fischer. On a neo-Classical the appearance of restraint. "There was a return to lavish living," says the designer. "They were trying to recreate 18th- and 19th-century excess. It was less about refinement and more about grandeur."

THOSE PIONEERS BRAZENLY mixed their messages and eras, and Brûlé has absorbed this idea. In the sun-streaked sitting room, with floor-to-ceiling windows framing treetop views of the park, the entire suite of custom-designed upholstered furniture - down to the tufted sofa buttons made from silk embroidery thread from Samuel & Sons - has been dyed a dusty shade of gray-blue. It's a serene counterpoint to a huge, slashing 2020 abstract painting nearby in shades of violet, lavender and

Jean-Charles Moreux marble-top console sits an intricate white porcelain Meissen soup tureen decorated with cherubs that belonged to the owner's grandmother. A cast-bronze "Expansion" sculpture by the 1960s Nouveau Realisme artist César is mounted on the wall behind.

In the dining room, the choices grow even more daring, with a pair of nine-foot-tall 1930s birdcages converted into planters filled with giant ferns and, against a mirrored surface, a banquette upholstered in royal blue silk moiré jacquard by Veraseta, the fourth-generation Loire-region weaving company. A pair of 1950s black lacquer dining tables and midnight blue velvet-upholstered chairs from Maison Jansen fold up and are light enough to be moved to accommodate a cocktail hour or the







Clockwise from above left: in the sitting room, a suite of Italian Empire furniture purchased from the antiques dealer Jean-Paul Beaujard, custom polished nickel doors in the spirit of 1920s Modernism and an Urs Fischer painting; in the primary suite, Codimet Collection carpet and an 1870s officers' daybed, also purchased from Jean-Paul Beaujard; In the kitchen, a custom stainless-steel island from Abimis, a Picasso. plate and, in the background, Jacques Adnet chairs from 1946 uphotstered with original Aubusson tapestry representing each sign of the zodiac; a bed, designed by Brute in collaboration with Victoria & Son, inspired by the neo-Classical designs of Emilio Terry and Serge Roche. The fabric on the ceiling, walls and bed is Fortuny.

visterous impromptu dinner parties at the tamily often throws - made asier by access to room service om Harry Cipriani on the ground floor (another vestigial amenity of the

The nearby kitchen stands in sober contrast to such ebullience. Clad in stainless-steel and oak paneling, its wet green-and-red Italian marble squares in a variety of textures - sandblasted. honed, leathered. A round stainlessdesigned in the 1960s by the Italian photographer and furniture designer Willy Rizzo is surrounded by a set of tapestries depicting the signs of the zodiac. A giant steel island by the Italian be lifted by crane through the street-

On the other side of the apartment, in the space that Brule refers to as the nightclub room, his embrace of debauched glamour reaches its as a nod to the famed traditionalist Chicago architect David Adler, the tables and adorned with tufted chaise longues, armchairs and a Turkish-style U-shaped built-in sofa - all fitted in trippy acid vellow custom-dyed silk velvet. Underfoot is wall-to-wall tiger-print wool carpet by the French company Codimat are by the 184-year-old French lighting company Bagues, with silk shades custom-dyed to match the mounted pedestals above the built-in

While the apartment is a paean to European design since the 1700s. dictum of the great American designers of the 20th century, including Billy Baldwin, Elsie de Wolfe and Frances ease. Instead of the stiff formality that sometimes pervades European interiors, a softness permeates the with lofty goose-down cushions; the screening room has a plush gray daybed; the tentlike primary bedroom is swathed in creamy printed Fortuny meaning of comfort.



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