Art Partners



JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT'S *PER CAPITA*, 1981, AND ANDY WARHOL'S *LIZ #5 (EARLY COLORED LIZ)*, 1963, ANCHOR ONE END OF THE LOGGIA IN PETER BRANT AND STEPHANIE SEYMOUR BRANT'S FLORIDA HOME. A PAIR OF JEAN ROYÈRE OURS POLAIRE CHAIRS JOIN A BOOMERANG SOFA AND GALET I COFFEE TABLE, BOTH BY JOSEPH DIRAND EDITION. OTHER PIECES INCLUDE A TOWER CABINET BY ETTORE SOTTSASS, YO-YO SIDE TABLES BY ROYÈRE, AND AN ARABESCO TABLE BY CARLO MOLLINO.

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In Palm Beach, Paris architect *Joseph Dirand* joins forces with *Peter Brant* and *Stephanie Seymour Brant* to reconstruct a bold 1920s Addison Mizner house around the couple's legendary trove of art, design, and couture—letting the collection lead the way

TEXT BY **LUCAS OLIVER MILL** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ADRIEN DIRAND**

IT BEGAN WITH A CHANCE ENCOUNTER and a phone call. The French architect Joseph Dirand was walking into a restaurant in New York when he ran into an old friend, the art dealer Tico Mugrabi. Dirand mentioned that he was flying to Palm Beach the next day and his friend lit up. Mugrabi pulled out his phone and made a call. "Peter, my friend Joseph is coming to Palm Beach tomorrow," Dirand recalls him saying. "You have to meet this guy." The following day Dirand was sitting across from Peter Brant, the fabled industrialist and publisher, and his wife, Stephanie Seymour Brant, one of the defining supermodels of her generation, in their new home. The Brants had owned the house for only a few days, and it marked the opening of a new chapter for the couple.

There is something quintessentially American in how quickly it all unfolded, and for Dirand, it meant meeting a man he had long admired. As an inquisitive young designer he had pored over photographs of Brant's earlier homes, and one image had stayed with him: It showed a Jean Prouvé desk beneath a Jean-Michel Basquiat painting, captured at a time when almost no one thought to set French postwar design against contemporary art. "For me, Peter was a kind of collector's hero," says Dirand.

Brant's eye for art and design was formed early. His father loved classical art and considered even Picasso "way too modern," but on family ski trips to Switzerland the teenage Brant got to know the Zurich dealer Bruno Bischofberger, who subsequently introduced him to Leo Castelli, and the two titans of the art world became the young Brant's mentors. Brant then bought his first Andy Warhol painting in 1966, and by the time Warhol's business manager, Fred Hughes, introduced them in November 1968, he already owned about seven of them. Warhol and Brant would go on to become close friends for the remainder of the artist's life.

Few people then saw Warhol's work the way Brant did. When he hung his first Marilyn at home, visitors were shocked: "People would come to my house and think, This is the worst thing I've ever seen," he tells me. In the 1960s, he says, you could count the serious collectors of Pop art "on three hands."

His rule, he says, is to collect "something that was in style that's out of style," though never as speculation. Between their holdings and those of the Brant Foundation, which he established in 1996 to promote the education and appreciation of contemporary art and design, the collection now numbers more than 3,000 works, and he has never bought for a particular wall. What he misses in many newer collections is any sense of the person behind them. "You can see right away that this guy had a great adviser," he says, "but there's no madness in the collection. Every collection should have some madness."

BELOW LEFT THE BRANTS IN FRONT OF WARHOL'S *WHITE DISASTER (WHITE CAR CRASH 19 TIMES)*, 1963, IN THE GREAT ROOM. JEAN PROUVÉ COFFEE TABLE; SOFA AND CHAIRS BY PIERRE JEANNERET. **BELOW RIGHT** A PAIR OF BESPOKE PHILIPPE ANTHONIOZ FLOOR LAMPS FLANK JONATHAN HOROWITZ'S *SELF-PORTRAIT IN "MIRROR #1" (KEVIN)*, 2012. **OPPOSITE** BROWN JORDAN CHAISE LONGUES UNDER UMBRELLAS BY BUSINESS & PLEASURE CO. STAND POOLSIDE.





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MARC NEWSON'S ALUMINUM LOCKHEED LOUNGE, A TOWER CABINET BY ETTORE SOTTSASS, AND A TRAPEZE TABLE BY JEAN PROUVÉ ALL STAND IN THE LOGGIA. **OPPOSITE** A VÉGÉTALE MIRROR BY CLAUDE LALANNE REFLECTS *UNTITLED (RICHARD PRINCE AND CINDY SHERMAN)*, 1980, AND A 1930s SETTEE BY JEAN-MICHEL FRANK.

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Brant has shared much of his collecting journey with Seymour Brant, whom he married in 1995. She has built a collection of her own: Her passion is clothing rather than paintings, and she has pursued it with the same scholarship and the same sharp eye as her husband. She was a close friend of the legendary couturier Azzedine Alaïa and has one of the most significant holdings of his work, alongside historic couture that Dirand describes as extraordinary. Where Brant is the storyteller, Seymour Brant is the quieter presence, though Dirand is clear that she was integral to every decision. Her collecting has even changed the way Brant sees his own. "It's not a dress in a closet," he says. "It's a piece of art, and it mixes with art."

Brant has spent some 50 years in the Palm Beach area, first as a polo player. He and Seymour Brant had no need for a new home there—they loved the one they had as their children grew up. But when Collado Hueco, a home by Addison Mizner, the architect who defined 1920s Palm Beach, came on the market in 2020, the collector in him took over. "It was a piece of history," Dirand says. "For him, there was no choice." Designed in 1924 for the American businessman Paul Moore, it is one of Mizner's boldest and most unusual houses.

The house presented Dirand with a real puzzle. Asymmetrical, it spreads across multiple wings, varying from one to three levels. The main entertaining rooms had retained their original character, while the entrance and stair hall were dark and enclosed. Dirand set out to let the sunlight that moves across the house reach every part of the interior as much as possible. The collection shaped Dirand's approach too. With so many treasured works coming into the house, the team wanted to ensure they would be protected against anything the unpredictable Florida weather could bring. What began as a renovation became, in Dirand's words, "a reconstruction saving the historical." Rather than demolishing and starting again, the team kept the historic walls standing, reinforced every one of them, and dug beneath to take the foundations deeper. New hurricane-proof windows were set into concrete frames, the roof was removed and rebuilt, and the original tiles and the patina of the plaster fireplace were carefully preserved. The project took about four years. Throughout, Dirand immersed himself in Mizner's doors, ceilings, and patterns so that the new rooms would be a true homage rather than a copy.

Early on, Brant handed Dirand two thick binders, one of artworks and one of design pieces. "This is what you can use," he said. A few days later, on holiday with his family, Dirand spread

ABOVE A KOI POND IN THE LAWN. **BELOW** WARHOL'S 1975 PORTRAIT OF MURRAY BRANT (BRANT'S FATHER) COMMANDS A WALL OF THE PANELED STUDY. DIRECTION ARMCHAIR AND PRÉSIDENCE DESK BY JEAN PROUVÉ; ETTORE SOTTSASS HANGING LAMP. **OPPOSITE** IN A CORNER OF THE GREAT ROOM, ROY LICHTENSTEIN'S *THE REFRIGERATOR*, 1962, FACES A 1960 COPPER HANGING CABINET BY PAUL EVANS. A 1934 PLASTER VASE BY ALBERTO GIACOMETTI SITS ON A JOSEPH DIRAND EDITION ISEO GOLD COFFEE TABLE. 1950s HIRONDELLES WALL LIGHT BY JEAN ROYÈRE; PAIR OF 1958 DIEGO GIACOMETTI ARMCHAIRS.







ABOVE LEFT ARTWORKS IN THE ENTRANCE HALL INCLUDE, FROM LEFT, A MASSANGIS STONE LION-HEAD FOUNTAIN FEATURE BY HARUMI KLOSSOWSKA DE ROLA, 2022; ANDY WARHOL'S *SELF PORTRAIT (GREEN)*, 1964; A KLOSSOWSKA DE ROLA WOLF SCULPTURE; AND RICHARD PRINCE'S *NURSES' DORMITORY*, 2002. THE SANDED CEPPO DI GRÉ STONE MODULAR CONSOLE IS BY DIRAND. **ABOVE RIGHT** IN THE PRIMARY BEDROOM, GEORGE CONDO'S 2004 PORTRAIT OF STEPHANIE SEYMOUR BRANT HANGS ABOVE A 1946 CHARLOTTE PERRIAND SIDEBOARD ON WHICH STANDS AN ENAMELED EARTHENWARE LAMP BY ROGER CAPRON. A JEAN PROUVÉ BRIDGE ARMCHAIR JOINS AN OURS POLAIRE CHAIR AND SOFA BY JEAN ROYÈRE AROUND PROUVÉ'S TRIPOD COFFEE TABLE. **OPPOSITE** AN EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE 1926 ADDISON MIZNER RESIDENCE.

every page across the floors. "I was walking on the paper," he says. It reversed the usual order in which the architect designs the rooms and the art arrives afterward. Here the collection came first, though never rigidly, because "a collection is also something that is alive."

At the heart of the home are two main spaces, the great room and the loggia, which are perhaps the spaces that both Dirand and Brant are most proud of. The great room is centered around a monumental fireplace that has the grandeur of a castle. Commanding one wall is a rare carved-stone console by Alberto Giacometti, nearly three meters high and crowned with a bas-relief of a female figure, made for Jean-Michel Frank's important 1938 commission for the Born family in Argentina. It was one of a pair, and Dirand says no one knows where the other is today. Beside the fireplace hangs Warhol's 1963 *White Disaster (White Car Crash 19 Times)*, one of Brant's most recent and important acquisitions; he had wanted a Car Crash painting since the '60s. Prouvé furniture from Brazzaville, weathered by the Congo climate, sits amid Native American and African objects, and at the center of it all is a mirror polish copper table Dirand designed himself to reflect Giacometti's bird vase and the fireplace behind it. Brant calls the table a masterpiece.

The loggia is lighter and more playful, and its original black, yellow, and turquoise tiled floor and Egyptian-style column capitals offer a glimpse of Mizner at his most adventurous. One of the most prominent works hanging in the room is a monumental 1981 Basquiat painting, *Per Capita,* which Brant bought from Annina Nosei's memorial show for the artist. At the center of the room stands an Ettore Sottsass Tower Cabinet, designed in the early 1960s, which Dirand admits he didn't understand at first, until Brant showed him exactly how to place it. Now he can't imagine the room without it.

Upstairs, Dirand took down walls so that the primary bedroom runs the full width of the house, capturing light from sunrise over the ocean to sunset over the garden. In Seymour Brant's bathroom, Estremoz marble walls are carved to evoke curtains, and beyond it lies her dressing room, an intimate boudoir. Brant's bathroom, by contrast, is a marquetry of white and gray marble built around a pair of Glenn Ligon paintings. Dirand calls the room "minimalist ornamental."

Every piece in the house comes with a story, and Dirand heard many of them over years of breakfasts, lunches, and dinners with the couple. "Every single piece could be a book," he says. During those conversations, the collaboration between Brant and Dirand grew into a close friendship. Brant's other great passion is horse racing, and his formidable stable has included Sottsass, the 2020 winner of the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, Europe's most prestigious race. One day, Brant called Dirand with news: Sottsass had a son, a young thoroughbred already winning races of his own. He had named him Dirand. AD

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