



text: aric chen photography: bärbel miebach

no frills, just thrills

Contemporary artwork puts the edge on an updated
New York apartment by Julie Hillman





Moldings abounded, from baseboard to crown. Furniture clustered in fussy groupings. Some of the sofas even had skirts. Certainly not the domestic tableau you'd expect from a young family with a comprehensive collection of contemporary painting and photography, including work by Francesco Clemente, Julian Schnabel, and Nan Goldin. "The apartment didn't reflect the clients or their art," Julie Hillman recalls of the six-bedroom floor-through, 22 stories above New York's Upper East Side.

Fortunately, Hillman was already familiar with the territory. A Park Avenue mother herself, she'd studied at the Parsons School of Design before embarking on a career in fashion, designing for labels including Liz Claiborne. She made the switch to interiors

after her two children were born, designing the family's own cottage in East Hampton, New York. Having discovered her new professional love, she went on to found her namesake firm in 2001.

With a handful of residential renovations already in her portfolio, she was quick to identify the prewar floor-through's assets: generous windows, bleached-oak floors, and a 3,500-square-foot floor plan with a meandering perimeter that would help her make the interior light, open, and user-friendly for the couple and their three daughters. Stripping all the moldings was an easy first step. Determining the best spot for each artwork was a greater challenge; finding complementary furnishings was another.

In the entry hall—a cool white surprise

after the shiny Chinese red of the apartment's private vestibule—Hillman chose one wall for a 20-photograph series of Ugo Rondinone images. The space being long and narrow, with a 9-foot dropped ceiling to boot, she brought some ceremonial grandeur to an otherwise tight procession by installing a row of three large-scale dome light fixtures, cast in plaster of paris. To draw the eye to the end of the hall, she hung a Barbara Kruger photograph that superimposes a lasciviously open mouth over blocky red type spelling the word *good*.

A long wall in the living area displays two horizontal rows of eight Clemente watercolor nudes. Beneath them, she replaced a love seat (skirted) with two Antonio Citterio modular sofas (skirtless and covered in



Previous spread, left: Plaster of paris dome fixtures illuminate the entry hall of a New York apartment by Julie Hillman Design. A series of Ugo Rondinone photographs runs down the sidewall; the photograph on the end wall is by Barbara Kruger.

Previous spread, right: A Julian Schnabel oil hangs in the dining area, near Jordan Mozer's vinyl-covered tubular-steel chairs and a table with an acrylic base, circa 1970.

Left: In the living area, a pair of Antonio Citterio's modular sofas, upholstered in cashmere, stretch below watercolors by Francesco Clemente. To construct the cocktail table, Hillman mounted a 12-foot-long untrimmed walnut plank on solid walnut blocks. Rounding out the furnishings are a wool-covered armchair, Hillman's leather-covered daybed, and a Tibetan silk rug. **Above:** A trio of oil, plaster, and gesso paintings by Katherine Chadius hangs outside the living area, with its Schnabel oil on canvas. **Below:** A Moroccan 1970's disco ball glitters above the dining area's custom tabletop of cerused oak, radiating from a lacquered center.

creamy-white cashmere). Placed end to end, they form one 15-foot-long piece. "The size of the area makes it appropriate," says Hillman, who inclined toward pale oversize furniture that "lets the apartment breathe."

Naturally, a large sofa calls for a similarly sized cocktail table, so she found a 12-foot-long untrimmed walnut plank and mounted it on two solid walnut blocks, in the George Nakashima mode. On the other side of the table, Hillman's generous daybed gives a nod to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe—glammed up with an acrylic platform base.

The disco vibe gets stronger with the dining area's Moroccan 1970's mirror ball. "I tried forever to convince clients to buy that thing," Hillman recalls. "Finally, I found somebody who 'got it.'" The spinning ball →







Opposite: For the library, Hillman selected vintage pieces such as French 1940's sunburst mirrors, Eero Saarinen's wool-covered Womb chair and ottoman, and Vladimir Kagan's Snail table base in molded walnut plywood. Her clients contributed the leather-covered sofa and Joe Andoe's oils on linen.

Above: Hillman appointed the floor-through's private vestibule with a Karl Springer mirror and Tommi Parzinger's pair of stools, grouped beneath a Sang-Kyoon Noh image composed of sequins on canvas.



Left, from top: A Verner Panton chandelier lights the master suite's dressing area, furnished with a French 1940's vanity and a Parzinger stool that Hillman reupholstered in zebra skin. The master bedroom's David Smith oil on canvas hangs near a Venini glass lantern from about 1960. **Right:** Citterio designed the bed. Across the room, Hillman placed a velvet-covered chaise and a blackened-oak floor lamp, circa 1940, in front of Cecily Brown's oil on linen. **Below:** Crema Monaco honed limestone clads almost every surface in the master bathroom, where a Nan Goldin photograph hangs above the tub.





throws its sparkle over a mural-size oil by Schnabel, a honey-stained cerused-oak circular tabletop, and eight tubular-steel Jordan Mozer chairs, their burgundy vinyl cushions outlined by white velvet piping.

The modernism is balanced by a sprinkling of vintage showstoppers. In a corner of the living area stands Jansen's 1940's parchment-covered chest with Ming-style hinges and gilt cabriole legs. The mix of decades continues in the library, where French 1940's sunburst mirrors join Eero Saarinen's Womb chair in brown wool and a coffee table composed of a clear glass top and Vladimir Kagan's Snail base in molded walnut plywood. Works by Richard Serra and Joe Andoe complete the scene.

In the master suite—bedroom, dressing

area, and limestone-clad bath—Hillman used the same white palette seen in the apartment's public spaces. Shots of color are supplied by a chaise upholstered in rich brown velvet, a Tommi Parzinger stool covered in zebra skin, Venini lanterns in cobalt-blue glass, and Cecily Brown's erotic oil.

For the children's bedrooms, Hillman indulged every girlhood fantasy. The eldest sleeps in a life-size custom version of her favorite toy canopy bed. The middle daughter opted for shag carpet and steel-beaded curtains. And a fairy-tale headboard upholstered in pretty pink linen sends the toddler off to the sweetest of dreams. 🍷

PROJECT ASSISTANT: **LUIS MIGUEL CALLAO.**

DOMES FIXTURES (ENTRY HALL): **CYRUS COMPANY.** CHAIRS (DINING AREA): **THROUGH WRIGHT.** CUSTOM TABLETOP: **MOSS FAU-**

SET FURNITURE MAKERS. TABLE BASE: **THROUGH CESAR PAPE.** CUSTOM CHAIR (LIVING AREA): **VITANZA.** PILLOWS: **NICOLE FARHI.** LEAF DISH: **COCONUT COMPANY.** DAYBED UPHOLSTERY: **EDELMAN LEATHER.** CUSTOM DAYBED BASE: **GREWE PLASTICS.** CUSTOM COCKTAIL TABLE (LIVING AREA), SIDE TABLE (LIBRARY): **TUCKER ROBBINS.** CHAIR FABRIC (LIVING AREA), CHAIR, OTTOMAN FABRIC (LIBRARY): **ZIMMER + ROHDE.** SOFA (LIVING AREA), BED (BEDROOM): **B&B ITALIA.** CARPET (LIVING AREA, BEDROOM): **STARK CARPET CORP.** DISCO BALL (DINING AREA), FLOOR LAMP (BEDROOM): **THROUGH DUANE.** CHAIR, OTTOMAN (LIBRARY): **KNOLL.** TABLE BASE: **THROUGH LEREBOURS ANTIQUES.** PILLOWS: **LEATHER IMPACT.** CUSTOM CARPET: **PATTERSON, FLYNN & MARTIN.** MIRRORS (LIBRARY), LANTERNS (BEDROOM): **THROUGH JORDAN ANTIQUES.** STOOLS (VESTIBULE): **THROUGH LOCO.** MIRROR: **THROUGH ERIC APPEL.** CHANDELIER (DRESSING AREA): **THROUGH SUZANNE DEMISCH.** VANITY: **THROUGH AMERICA ANTIQUES & DESIGN.** STOOL: **THROUGH AERO.** BED LINENS (BEDROOM): **CITTADINI LINENS.** BEDCOVER: **MICHAEL BROWN.** CHAISE FABRIC: **ROGERS & GOFFIGON.** SHADE, DRAPERY FABRIC: **BERGAMO FABRICS.** STONE SUPPLIER (BATHROOM): **HAIFA.** UPHOLSTERING, CUSTOM WINDOW TREATMENTS: **TRIBECA UPHOLSTERY & DRAPERIES.** GENERAL CONTRACTOR: **PL CONSTRUCTION.**