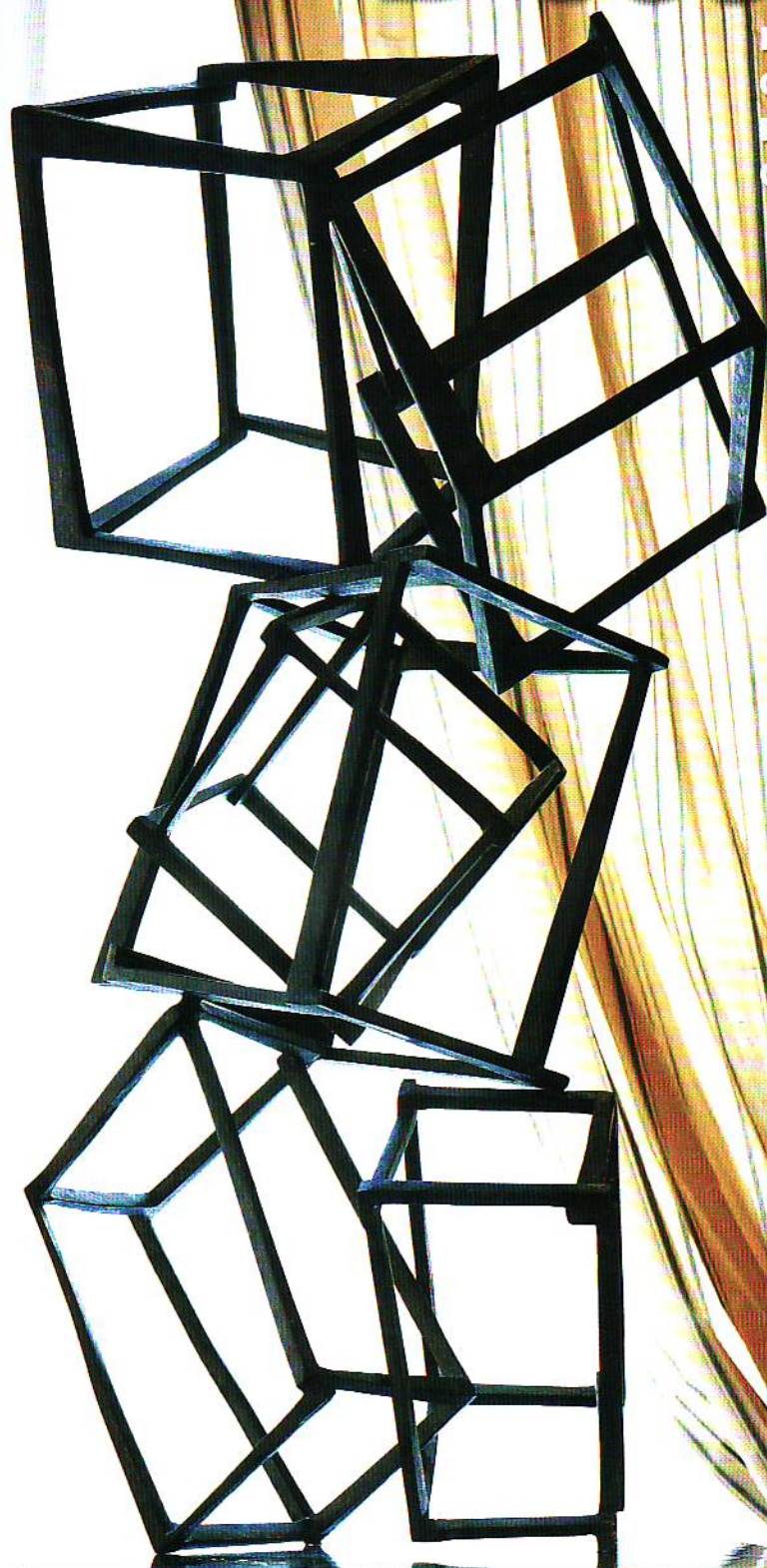


# December

HOUSE & GARDEN  
CELEBRATES THE  
BEAUTY AND DIVERSITY  
OF GREAT DESIGN



A classically appointed Manhattan town house is home to a collection of modern art gems, such as this Jedd Novatt bronze, from Galerie Hopkins-Custot, Paris.

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# PROPER CONTEXT

THE CRISP LINES AND SERENE PALETTE OF A MANHATTAN TOWN HOUSE  
MAKE A PERFECT COMPLEMENT TO A COLLECTION OF MODERN ART



The entry, opposite page, announces the twin notes of tradition and modernism. Clean classic lines are punctuated by such elements as Jean Royère's ca. 1946 Tour Eiffel console and an anonymous bronze abstract sculpture from Italy. ■ In the living room, this page, Hans Hofmann's dynamic *Don Quijote* (1963) tilts against a plush Anthony Lawrence-Belfair Carr sofa, in Classic Cloth's Coco Repp in Ginger, and a Tabriz carpet from Darius, through Stark Carpet. The gilded iron coffee table, topped with glass, is from Jean-François Dubois, Paris.

Oversized patterns, like those of the carpet and a damask from Travers that covers fauteuils by Jules Leleu, add tempo to the living room's warm, caramel palette, while sheer curtains in Travers's Linen Shade bring lightness and transparency. Artworks such as the 1964 David Smith nudes (two flank the Hofmann) and Jedd Novatt's bronze *34.45* (1999) serve as exclamation points. The roll-back Paley chairs are by Anthony Lawrence-Belfair, NYC.

For a designer, creating rooms around an art collection that has yet to be acquired is like assembling a jigsaw puzzle that is missing several pieces: the resolution of the picture (provided you haven't peeked at the box cover) remains a mystery. In fact, you can't even be sure, says designer David Kleinberg, that the missing pieces will turn up at all. "Within the concept of a living room, you might say we'll put a sculpture in that corner," he explains. "But ten years later you go back and that corner is still empty."

However, sometimes clients surprise you. Take the forty-something couple who hired Kleinberg to create an environment for the collection they planned to build and exhibit in their New York town house. All concerned were in sync about the sort of art that would work in these crisp, traditional interiors. From the beginning, everyone felt that only energetic postwar works would create the desired impact. Before the clients hit the galleries, however, their first need was a comfortably elegant home in which to raise their twin children.

Besides Kleinberg, the design team included architect Nasser Nakib and art adviser Kim Heirston.

"We knew we wanted to keep the architectural background classic," says Kleinberg. "And there was a certain formality to the rooms in terms of scale." Nakib devised a neoclassical





## THE PATINA OF AGE AND PAINSTAKING CRAFTSMANSHIP OF ANTIQUE FURNISHINGS PROVIDE AN IDEAL FOIL FOR THE ENERGY AND SPONTANEITY OF MODERN ART

wishes, he developed an overall quiet color palette that incorporated “a low-key use of color,” persuading them to experiment with bolder hues in some rooms, as with the deep clarets of the library. And when it came to appointing the interiors, Kleinberg observes, his clients gravitated toward a catholic mix of styles. “They became interested in twentieth-century French furniture,” he says, “which we used as a sort of foil for Empire and Directoire pieces.” On vigorous shopping trips to Paris, they roamed the city for hours, picking up antiques from a wide range of countries and periods: a circa 1825 German ebonized vitrine for the master bedroom, a Czech cubist desk for the library, a set of Empire chairs for the dining room, and, for the living room, 1950s Jules Leleu fauteuils, a late-eighteenth- or early-nineteenth-century Russian table, and nineteenth-century mahogany Italian stools. “Of course, they always outstrip you,” says Kleinberg of his clients. “They do much more research than you do.” ▶

Stairway landings are an opportunity for “grand moments,” as designers say. This one features a gilded iron lantern by Gilbert Poillerat and Italian 19th-century urns. The stairs are covered in a custom moiré wool carpet from Patterson, Flynn & Martin, NYC. ▶ The dining room, opposite page, furthers the thematic interplay of art and design. A 1950s Venetian chandelier from Karl Kemp, NYC, a Regency-style Anglo-Indian table from Leuchars & Jefferson, London, and Empire side chairs in Old World Weavers’ Gael horsehair in Beige and Gris are counterpoised against an untitled Richard Serra oil stick drawing (above the mantel) and a small Andy Warhol silk screen, at left. The 19th-century Oushak carpet is from Doris Leslie Blau, NYC.

framework, designing and specifying pediments, cornices, moldings, and ceiling friezes typical of many Upper East Side buildings of the 1920s (the era when this one was erected). Designer and clients shopped for fireplace mantels that enhanced the neoclassical structure, scaring up, for example, a 1790 Louis XVI statuary piece, placed in the master bedroom, and, for the library, a circa 1820 Regency specimen marble mantel. “Nasser opened up the stairs in a gracious way,” says Kleinberg, “and the kitchen became a family-oriented, eat-in kitchen rather than a service kitchen.”

Kleinberg dressed the windows of the resulting rooms with silk, but otherwise opted for linens, cottons, wools, and leathers—fabrics that could withstand the active life of a young family.

In accordance with his clients’





For the dining room, Heirston brought in a Lee Krasner, but "it was almost too perfect for the room," she remembers. "So much so that [the wife] felt it looked almost decorative." In the end, Francesco Clemente's *New York After Hours* and a Richard Serra oil stick drawing commanded the space. And so it went with works by Lucio Fontana, Robert Rauschenberg, Alexander Calder, Andy Warhol, Brice Marden, Robert Mangold, and Sol Lewitt.

"Without art, the house was kind of sad," says Kleinberg. "Now, there's a real correctness to these interiors. They're not trendy or fashionable. I like to think that people can't tell when exactly these rooms were decorated. But the pictures move things forward. They're bold, surprising images." In other words, the puzzle's missing pieces. Jorge S. Arango is a New York writer and stylist.

Kleinberg, at left, standing before a 17th-century chinoiserie console, is masterful with figured marble and wood. ■ In one bathroom, below, "the marble is aggressive," the designer says, "and the rest is very strict." The lighting is Mrs. MacDougall's Platt model in matte nickel; the faucet is from Waterworks' Aero Collection. ■ In the media room—with its striking maple moldings and glass-front bookcases—the pairing of a Richard Diebenkorn painting with a Regency specimen marble mantel, from Barry Perry, NYC, is framed by Bergamo's cotton and horsehair Criollo wall covering. The ca. 1815 rosewood chairs have cushions in Brunswig & Fils' Crosshatch in Pomegranate; the custom ottoman is made of Edelman's Luxe Calf in Vino. See Shopping, last pages.

Considering how much was acquired, Kleinberg notes, the aim was never to fill the rooms to bursting. "I like air around things," he says. "There are fancy moments in the living room—the sparkle of a mirror, gold boxes on a coffee table—but it's not packed."

Marches through Paris served the clients well when it came time to select art. "David enhanced their stamina," jokes Heirston. "They could go out with me for three or four hours in New York." Heirston's point of departure was twofold: the husband's pronouncement that Jackson Pollock was his favorite artist and Heirston's observation that the couple "gravitated toward black-and-white and neutral colors, not only in David's work, but in their dress." Since the appearance of Pollocks on the market nowadays is rare, she concentrated on other Abstract Expressionists' work that exhibited similar "texture, energetic brushwork, a neutral or black-and-white palette, and a bold, graphic quality."

In the living room they hung Hans Hofmann's oil painting *Don Quijote*, from 1963. Kleinberg remembers the day the wife called him over to have a look. "I loved the graphic quality of the painting," he says. "It completely transformed the room. Here's a space that could be kind of staid, and then there's this action painting giving it motion."

Heirston, too, was amazed at her clients' intrepidity. To flank the Hofmann, for example, they approved her selection of two untitled David Smith nudes from 1964. "The clients were prescient," she says. "The Smith works had the feeling of de Kooning women, and they bought them at a time when David Smith wasn't the household name he is today."

