Metropolitan Home

DESIGN 100

WE PICK THE BEST OF THE BEST

A Bedroom Dreamscape, p.142

The Most Beautiful Homes in America
- Brilliant Lighting
- Bright Stripes
- Smart Eco Houses
- Easy Paint
- Sexy Sofas
- Accessories That Shine
- and Much, Much More...
CENTRAL PARK SUITE

IN A MANHATTAN HIGH-RISE, DESIGN STAR CELERIE KEMBLE DEFINES A NEW URBAN WARMTH WITH COLORS OF SHIMMERING COMPLEXITY, PLUSH FABRICS AND A WIDE-RANGING SAMPLING OF STYLES.
From David LaSae's 69th-floor pied-à-terre, Manhattan looks like a Google earth map of itself: a gleaming metropolis of glass, steel and stone outlined by twin rivers converging somewhere beyond the green rectangle of Central Park and framed by infinite sky. It's a perspective that cries out for interior design capable of rising to the dramatic occasion.

Enter Celerie Kemble, a young designer known for her fresh, creative spin on exuberant Palm Beach style, as well as for her own widely available furniture line for Laneventure and her remarkable shopping talent. "That spectacular view can make you feel on top of the world, or it can make you feel small," she says. "It was very important here to create softness and warmth." LaSae's, a bicoastal investment banker and serious wine collector who loves to entertain, wanted his New York City home to be "light and bright, friendly and cozy" with an unobstructed park view and, in Kemble's words, "filled with furniture people can comfortably sit in and chat for hours until the cheese course arrives."

To warm things up, the once-white walls of the 2,800-square-foot apartment were swathed in pattern, texture and—one of Kemble's favorite words—sheen. Color was key: When designer and client, shopping together for the first time, came across an abstract wall sculpture by midcentury artist Curtis Jeré, they knew they were on the same stylistic page. The piece, composed of copper scraps with earthy, jewel-toned patinas ranging from verdigris to deep purple, set the palette for the entire apartment. "It looked like a tetanus shot waiting to happen, but I was really excited he liked it," Kemble says. "That's when I knew this job was going to be fun."

Left: The piece that started it all, a 1960s metal wall sculpture, anchors a seating area. Right: The rosewood dining table (top) sits on a sleek pedestal (turquoise carved wood chairs are a custom version of a famous midcentury design); the honeycombed wine rack lets light flow between the living room and the kitchen; Kemble worked with Casamidy to design a bistro table (bottom) to coordinate with Mexican wrought-iron chairs.

PRODUCED BY SUSAN TYREE VICTORIA. PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANNIE SCHLECHTER. WRITTEN BY CARA GREENBERG.
What the Pros Know

"Unless you do something special with it," says designer Celerie Kemble, "drywall is never going to add depth to a room." Here, she used plain paint in utility spaces only; the rest is "utterly wrapped in fabrics and wall coverings for a softer feel." In the entry hall (below), a dusting of gold on silk creates a parchmentlike look. In the simply furnished guest room (left), grass cloth wallpaper makes the space feel enclosed and inviting. Grass cloth in the living room has several colors woven throughout, including pale silvery blue, cream and gray—"Minute variations that nevertheless add interest and dynamism," Kemble says. The batten fabric wall in the master bedroom (right) is made of chocolate-brown herringbone men's suiting fabric and creates enveloping quiet. An old-fashioned technique now made more flexible by technology, batten walls are created by tucking fabric into plastic strips nailed to plywood sheets. Metallic bronze paper on the bedroom's other walls cast an amber glow.

In nine months, Kemble knocked out a wall, eliminating a third bedroom and bath to create a river-to-river view from the north-facing living room; designed headboards, upholstered seating and built-in storage of cerused walnut throughout the apartment; chose side chairs and tables from her 60-piece furniture line; and shopped from Palm Beach's Dixie Highway to ssthubs.com. "I shop by eye, not by provenance," she says. "I love art deco, French '40s and Chinese Chippendale. They're modern but sensuous."

The speedy job was facilitated by the trust of her client, who interviewed six designers before hiring Kemble, then went off to New Orleans to volunteer for three weeks in the aftermath of Katrina and left her to it. The two share an affinity for mirrored and lacquered surfaces, vintage accessories, luxurious fabrics and sunshine.

LaSae's primary residence is on the beach in Southern California. Kemble grew up in Palm Beach, where her mother, Mimi McMakin, is a renowned decorator. Kemble majored in English at Harvard before realizing that she, too, was born to design.

Client and designer were so simpatico that when LaSae imagined eggplant-shaped hanging light fixtures for the master bedroom and tossed off a sketch, Kemble found a glassblower to create them. "I would close my eyes and say, 'That's the way I envision it,'" he recalls, "and she would find something that worked perfectly."}

See Resources, last pages.

Above: The scalloped, tufted headboard in the guest room was designed by Kemble. The white lacquer lamp table, inspired by Tommi Parzinger, and scroll-back side chair are from Kemble's laneventure line. Right: The entry hall's gilded plastic mirror is a 1960s relic; the sconces and hornlike glass shelf brackets came from Paris dealers. Opposite: The mirrored vanity and side table, designed by Kemble, reflect light into a shadowy space.