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8 YOUNG ARTISTS ON THE RISE
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IN FULL VIEW

A COUPLE'S MUSEUM-QUALITY ART COLLECTION IS GIVEN ROOM TO BREATHE IN A MANHATTAN APARTMENT MAGNIFICENTLY TRANSFORMED BY ARCHITECT MARK STUMER AND DESIGNER JAMES AMAN

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Left: Merging three New York apartments into a single floor-through residence, the architecture firm Mojo Stumer Assoc. and interior designer James Aman created a dazzling showcase for art. The entrance gallery displays highlights from the homeowners’ collection, including paintings by Jean Dubuffet (left), Jean-Michel Basquet (far wall), and Jim Dine (right); the sculptures are by (from left) Fernando Botero, Roy Lichtenstein, Bruce Nauman, and Louise Nevelson. For details see Sources.
THERE COMES A DAY IN MANY PASSIONATE COLLECTORS’ LIVES WHEN THEIR ART SIMPLY OUTGROWS THEIR HOME—

when a space, by virtue of its scale, proportions, or layout, no longer does the works justice. That day arrived about five years ago for one New York couple, a real-estate developer and his wife, who had been living in the same Upper East Side apartment for nearly three decades. Over time their trove had expanded into a small museum’s worth of blue-chip works by the likes of Alexander Calder, Donald Judd, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Cindy Sherman. “We needed better light,” the wife recalls. “And the art needed to breathe.”

Fortunately she and her husband found just the solution—or rather solutions. On the market were two adjacent apartments in a prewar Park Avenue building designed by architect J. E. R. Carpenter and noted for its high ceilings and generously proportioned rooms. The couple purchased the properties, totaling around 7,200 square feet, hopeful they might one day nab the other unit on the floor and claim the entire level. In the meantime they undertook a gut renovation of the two spaces, calling upon architect Mark Stumer and interior designer James Aman to merge them into a series of airy, art-friendly rooms.

“We started from scratch—nothing is where it was,” Stumer says. The job, which took a year and a half to complete, arranged the master suite and kitchen at opposite ends of the residence and aligned the family, dining, and living rooms, plus the study, in a row, with pocket doors between them to accommodate gatherings small or large. “They entertain a lot,” he says of the homeowners, active philanthropists with extended family nearby.

The entrance hall, 55 feet long, makes a striking impression, acting as both a grand gallery for art and the apartment’s central spine. Here, as throughout the home, Stumer and Aman mixed details both traditional and modern. Sleek crown moldings complement flourishes of bronze used for doorways and glass-paneled
Clockwise from above: The living room features (from left) an Alex Katz portrait, a Robert Mangold abstract work, a Donald Judd wall sculpture, and a butterfly painting by Damien Hirst; the tabletop train sculpture is by Jeff Koons, and the antique rug is from Doris Leslie Blau. Hanging at the room’s opposite end are paintings by (from left) Cy Twombly, Eric Fischl, and Ellsworth Kelly; the bronze chair is by Claude Lalanne. The kitchen is outfitted with Franke sink fittings, and a Viking microwave, range, and refrigerators.
partitions. "The metal edges stand out against the beauty and grace of the Venetian-plaster walls," notes the architect. Lighting was of paramount importance in this interior corridor. Crystal chandeliers serve as glittering focal points, while recessed spotlights bathe the walls in a carefully calibrated glow. "We experimented with different bulbs," Stumer says. "The soft-white ones we chose bring a slight warmth without washing out or yellowing the art."

And what extraordinary art it is, reading like a minisurvey of 20th-century masters. Paintings by Jean Dubuffet, Robert Rauschenberg, Gerhard Richter, and others are displayed alongside sculptures by Louise Nevelson, Roy Lichtenstein, Dan Flavin, and Bruce Nauman. Placing the works was a labor of love for the homeowners. "When we first moved in, we leaned them against walls, just to see, and then lived with it all for a week," says the wife, who has been collecting with her husband for four decades.

The rest of the apartment similarly offers a primer on many of the art world’s most celebrated contemporary talents, from Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst to Alex Katz and George Condo. The assembly of August works could have veered toward the solemn and serious, but the installations here percolate with obvious fun and delight. Enlivening the minimalist kitchen is a Laurie Simmons photograph depicting a birthday cake strutting on female legs, playfully encouraging sweet indulgences. In the gym, conversely, a Robert Mapplethorpe image of impressively muscled bodies has been known to provide workout inspiration. Equally sly is the placement of a Tom Wesselmann wall sculpture of a reclining female nude, which the couple positioned directly over their bed.

"There's a wonderful sense of humor," says Aman, who incorporated the works into richly layered interiors. Choice paintings and sculptures commute comfortably with standout furnishings, from vintage tables by Philip and Kelvin LaVerne to a bespoke sofa based on a Syrie Maugham design for Elsa Schiaparelli. The dining room features apricot silk-velvet and beaded wall coverings that were sparked not by the orange tones in the David Hockney or Milton Avery paintings hanging there but by the wife's beloved set of Royal Crown Derby china. In the living room a Yayoi Kusama sculpture of a basket filled with phallic and floral forms casually mingles with candy dishes atop James Mont tiered side tables.

The sweets are reminders that the space is, above all else, "a family apartment," as the wife puts it. She and her husband recently acquired the other unit on their floor, enabling them to add guest quarters, a second gym, a pantry, and an informal dining room, where the whole clan gathers for Sunday suppers of Chinese takeout. "The guys all watch football," the wife says, and touchdowns are celebrated beneath a Calder mobile, with a Sherman and a Koons looking on. Rarely have art and sports paired so gracefully.
A Tom Wesselmann wall sculpture presides over the master suite, whose bed and nightstands were custom designed by John Mook; the bedding is by Pratesi, the lacquered tables are by Maitland-Smith, the metallic stool is an artwork by Sylvie Fleury, and the carpet is by Stark. Opposite: The study is furnished with an Art Deco desk from Karl Kerry Antiques, a 1960s cocktail table from Bernd Goekloer Antiques, and a suite of Rose Tarlow Melrose House chairs clad in an Edelman leather; a Tang-dynasty horse stands in the window, and the skull is by Damien Hirst.