

POMP & POP

IN A STATELY PARK AVENUE APARTMENT, DESIGNER BUZZ KELLY OF JED JOHNSON ASSOCIATES MIXES RARE OLD-WORLD FURNISHINGS WITH BOLD CONTEMPORARY ART

TIGER

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Buzz Kelly's design pairs an unorthodox color palette with furnishings that have bold, arresting forms and striking details. In the living room, the studded bronze frame of a Kelly-designed sofa, covered in Clarence House's Velours Uni in Nattier, plays off bronze ornaments on coffee tables by Gilbert Poillerat and side tables by André Arbus. The pearlescent damask silk on the bergères mirrors the ground color of the carpet, another Kelly design. The art is Roni Horn's Tiger Tiger, from the Matthew Marks Gallery, NYC.



ARISTOTLE OBSERVED THAT "WIT IS EDUCATED INSOLENCE."

By that definition, the decor of this apartment on Manhattan's Upper East Side—owned by a couple who share the space with their two adolescent children—is as sharp as a sushi knife. Refined and intelligent, the interior design at the same time includes singular, chameleonic colors and juxtapositions of art and antiques that are brash, provocative, and playful.

Wit is never accidental. The woman of the house, who took the lead in organizing the decor with Buzz Kelly of the New York interiors firm Jed Johnson Associates, is an avid collector of contemporary art, and her choices offer evidence of a smart, well-developed sense of mischief. Most of her favored artists—Andy Warhol, Cindy Sherman, Gary Hume, Takashi Murakami, Mike Kelley, and others—are an ironic bunch whose work offers sly commentary on modern culture. The choice of design firms had a certain logic, too. Jed Johnson Associates, after all, has bona fide Warholian roots. The Johnson twins, Jed and Jay, were part of the artist's coterie, and Jed (who died in 1996) was a frequent collaborator with Alan Wanzenberg, the architect who had renovated this space for the couple.

Given that cutting-edge ethos, the first purchase that Kelly and his client made might seem odd: a late-eighteenth-century Imperial Russian sofa, neoclassical in style, with an ornate verdigris finish and a curving base supported by gilded sphinxes. But the client likes her furniture as she likes her art: surprising. "She didn't want the usual Park Avenue

A stunning late-18th-century Russian sofa covered in Rogers & Goffigon's custom-embroidered Fiorella in Chardin, above, is the focal point of another seating group in the living room, which includes ottomans by Jean-Charles Moreux and armchairs designed by Kelly. ■ Gary Hume's *Green and Black Orchid*, opposite page, hangs behind one of the chairs, which are upholstered in a Clarence House velour, and a Maison Jansen coffee table.





In another area of the spacious living room: Gary Hume's enamel-on-bronze statue *Carnival Snowman* and a Mike Kelley painting, purchased by the client through auction; a 19th-century Italian settee in Horsehair in blue/gold; and a Maison Frank coffee table. • The library is lined in madrone wood panels and shelves, and the furnishings include an alabaster sconce by Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann, 19th-century Spanish armchairs, and a Jansen table. Kelly designed the sofa as well as the carpet, which he based on a rug on the French luxury liner *Normandie*.

apartment, and she didn't want what her parents had," says Kelly. "I came from the most minimalist background, beyond Le Corbusier!" the client interjects. "She wanted a beautiful but eclectic place that was fun and funky," Kelly adds.

The Russian sofa "dictated everything else that went on from there," says the client. It determined Kelly's approach to the furniture as voluptuous sculptural objects playing off the cool, slick nature of much of the art. It led them to the unusual color scheme—an almost phosphorescent lavender blue mixed with touches of gold and acid green—of the living room, where the sofa was placed, and more generally to the pair's attitude toward color throughout the apartment.

"Color to me is important in everything," says the client. Her art, she says, "is full of color, movement, and pop," and she asked Kelly to come up with what she calls specially mixed "noncolor colors." She explains the idea this way: "You're aware you're sitting in a color environment, but it doesn't scream at you. And if you were asked to recall the color, you couldn't say exactly what it was. I think that's really cool." Take the fabric for the club chairs that Kelly designed to accompany the Russian sofa: they're upholstered in velvet that's unmistakably blue but also feels somehow tinted simultaneously purple and green. The client was equally eccentric about floor coverings. She felt the rugs she was shown were overpowering, so Kelly designed and custom-colored every carpet in the house.

Then again, nothing is by the book here. Though the furnishings, for example, may all be neoclassical, their origins are far-flung and from many periods. There are other Russian



COLOR CHAMELEON

KELLY'S CLIENT HAD A HIGHLY REFINED SENSE OF COLOR AND WAS WILLING TO TAKE RISKS TO ACHIEVE SOMETHING TRULY ORIGINAL. "SHE REALLY WANTED TO MAKE THE COLORS HER OWN," SAYS KELLY.

- USING PAINTS FROM PRATT & LAMBERT AND FARROW & BALL, KELLY HAD COLORS SPECIALLY MIXED ON-SITE. MANY OF THE HUES HE CONCOCTED SEEM TO CHANGE IN DIFFERENT LIGHT. THE LIVING ROOM WALLS MORPH FROM PALE GRAY TO BEIGE TO THE LIGHTEST BLUE; THE BEDROOM WALLS READ PUTTY FROM ONE ANGLE AND VERDIGRIS FROM ANOTHER.
- KELLY CHOSE UPHOLSTERY FABRICS THAT HAVE A SIMILAR CHAMELEONIC EFFECT. THE VELOURS UNI IN NATTIER ON CLUB CHAIRS HE DESIGNED FOR THE LIVING ROOM CAN LOOK BLUE OR VIOLET WITH A HINT OF GREEN.

TRADE SECRETS

PIECE BY PIECE

PRESENTED WITH AN APARTMENT IN A VENERABLE BUILDING IN A PRIME MANHATTAN ZIP CODE, DESIGNER BUZZ KELLY WANTED TO RESPECT THE HISTORY OF THE SPACE WHILE CREATING AN AMBIENCE THAT WAS INVITING, YOUNG, AND FRESH. ESCHEWING A STYLISTIC THEME, HE SLOWLY GATHERED FURNISHINGS THAT ARE FROM MANY PERIODS BUT HAVE A SIMILAR AESTHETIC HEFT.

▲ DESIGNED BY ART DECO GREAT ANDRÉ ARBUS, A MARBLE-TOPPED PALISANDER SIDEBOARD, ABOVE, FEATURES TWO-TONE MATERIALS AND A CLASSICAL DETAIL:

A BRONZE MOUNT OF A MEDUSA HEAD, FAR RIGHT, BY RUSSIAN SCULPTOR VADIM ANDROUSOV.

• HIS CLIENT WAS CAPTIVATED BY AN ECCENTRIC LATE-18TH-CENTURY RUSSIAN SOFA WITH NEOCLASSICAL ELEMENTS. ITS LIGHT AND DARK WOODS AND ITS GUTSY DETAILING CUED KELLY'S DESIGN FOR THE ENTIRE DECOR.

• A KELLY-DESIGNED CARPET IN THE LIVING ROOM, IN GOLD, MILKY GRAY, AND STEEL TONES, IS ANOTHER GENRE HYBRID, BLENDING GREEK KEY AND GARLAND BORDERS WITH AN ART DECO FLOWER MOTIF.

THE CRAFT

• WHEN KELLY NEEDED A FEW COPIES MADE OF THE 1940S FRENCH SIDE CHAIRS HE CHOSE FOR THE DINING ROOM, HE WENT TO FISCHER FURNITURE, NYC. OFTEN SCORNEO, "REPRODUCTIONS ARE STILL ONE-OF-A-KIND PIECES," SAYS THE FIRM'S ERIC WHITELEY. "EACH PIECE HAS A UNIQUE SET OF ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE CRAFTSMAN."

• FISCHER ALSO FABRICATED KELLY'S DESIGN FOR THE BRONZE INLAID MAHOGANY DINING TABLE. IT TOOK FOUR MONTHS TO MAKE, BUT AS WHITELEY ASKS: "DO YOU WANT AN HEIRLOOM, OR A TROPHY?"



WHAT TO DO WITH ART

AN ART COLLECTION OFFERS A CHALLENGE TO THE DECORATOR: DO YOU PLAY OFF THE PIECES OR LET THEM STAND ON THEIR OWN? KELLY DEVISED A NUMBER OF INTERESTING APPROACHES.

• TAKASHI MURAKAMI'S "EYE/LUV," TOP, IS A TAKE ON LOUIS VUITTON'S SIGNATURE PATTERN. ITS PLAYFULNESS IS ENHANCED WHEN THE PIECE IS HUNG ABOVE THE RICHLY GRAINED ARBUS SIDEBOARD.

• THE NOT-QUITE-MANGO WALL PAINT AND THE HUES IN THE CARPET THAT KELLY DESIGNED FOR THE DINING ROOM, OPPOSITE PAGE, WERE CLEARLY INFLUENCED BY THE TWO PORTRAITS OF MAO BY ANDY WARHOL.

◀ CINDY SHERMAN'S ROCOCO PORCELAIN TERRINE, LEFT, WHICH FEATURES THE ARTIST AS MADAME DE POMPADOUR, IS DOUBLY WITTY WHEN SET OFF BY THE STRONG, SIMPLE LINES OF THE DINING TABLE.



Two versions of Andy Warhol's Mao preside over the dining room. Antique finds, like the 1940s French dining chairs (a few are copies, made to fill out the set) and a Jacques Adnet console, are paired with custom pieces, like the dining table, designed by Kelly and inspired by Ruhlmann and Jules Leleu. The chairs are upholstered in Clarence House's silk Carre Royal in Bruno Ciaro.



pieces but also Spanish furniture from the eighteenth century (an elaborately carved and gilded settee on the second-floor landing) and nineteenth century (a pair of chairs in the library); a turn-of-the-century Danish daybed (in the master bedroom); an Italian nineteenth-century settee (with carved eagle and ram heads in the living room). The French Deco school, which was rooted in neoclassicism, is represented by numerous pieces by Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann, André Arbus, Gilbert Poillerat, and Jacques Adnet.

The canniness of Kelly and his client is most evident in the way they combine art, furnishings, and color. In the dining room, one of Murakami's "super-flat" Louis Vuitton paintings, flanked by Ruhlmann sconces, hangs above a palisander sideboard by Arbus that has a sensuously bowed front and an elaborate Medusa escutcheon. A Rococo-style porcelain terrine looks oddly serious here—until you look closely and see that it's Cindy Sherman in the guise of Madame de Pompadour printed on the sides of the piece.

The room's color is an indeterminate shade existing somewhere between cantaloupe and mango, maybe, or perhaps light pumpkin. The scheme, which also includes lilac pink accents, clearly takes its cue from Warhol's Mao portraits, hung above an Adnet console. "I think the orange and lilac palette might be a hard sell for most women on Park Avenue," says Kelly with a wry smile. But not, happily for him, for someone with the wit to appreciate a great idea when she hears it. *Jorge S. Arango is a New York writer and stylist.*



In the entry, opposite page, Kelly poses with Jerald Lean's *Untitled*, bought from the Lucas Schoormans Gallery, NYC. ■ In the master bedroom, a Takashi Murakami stuffed toy sits atop a Danish neoclassical daybed that is covered in Christopher Hyland's Canaletto silk velvet in Royal Blue. A Brice Marden etching from his *Cold Mountain* series hangs between ca. 1940 French sconces. A carved bench by André Arbus sits at the foot of the bed. See Shopping, last pages.