

INTERIORS[®]



ART IN DESIGN



ECLECTIC COMPANY

INTERIOR DESIGN: PEMBROOKE & IVES

TEXT: ABIGAIL STONE

PHOTOGRAPHY: GENEVIEVE GARRUPPO





While the specs for a pre-war apartment in Manhattan by Pembroke & Ives didn't flag the project as unusual, they belied its true nature. "It's definitely a maximalist approach," says studio director Rendell Fernandez, who spearheaded the architectural renovations. While the clients had come through word of mouth, "they were adamant that we not do anything that was like their friends' homes," remembers Jessica Iwaniec, the company's design director, who handled the interior design.

Fernandez understood they'd be operating well outside the firm's wheelhouse when the wife vetoed the use of downlights. "I've never had a client say that," he says. "And I've been doing this a long time." That directive, Iwaniec remembers, came with the request that the decorative fixtures be "bright enough to do surgery under." There were other parameters: Though the apartment's original floor creaked, the clients didn't want to update it; they rejected anything stock or standard (even the closet's hanging rods were custom); and gray and brown was to be avoided, though the wife loved the entire spectrum of blues. Apart from these mandates, "they were up for anything," says Iwaniec. "Not many clients want to go this far," adds Fernandez.

While Iwaniec scoured the globe for furniture and accessories, Fernandez manipulated the apartment's spatial limitations. He converted a bedroom into a closet that would encompass the wife's vast wardrobe. He deftly hid air conditioning and audiovisual equipment. He carved a spacious kitchen and breakfast area out of a series of intricate rooms. New millwork—"None of the moldings are original," Fernandez notes—adeptly hides drapery elements and re-proportions rooms. Most importantly, it creates a classical backdrop against which the clients' art and the singular pieces Iwaniec discovered take flight. "We definitely pushed them in directions they'd not gone," says Iwaniec. That experience was a two-way street. "I got to explore materials and resources I'd never used before," she says.





The clients' art collection clued Iwaniec into their pop sensibility and appreciation for irony. Those ideas weave their way through the home's premise. That begins in the entryway, where Betil Dagdelen's custom alloy bench, shelving by Jim Zivic sourced through Ralph Pucci, a mirror and neon sculpture by Iván Navarro, and a painting by Caitlin Keogh, hung upside down ("We liked it better that way," says Iwaniec), are poised against the lush topography of the glossy white walls and the herringbone floor.

In some cases, like in the dining room, a bold find led the design. "We identified the Frida Fjellman chandeliers and then made our way to everything else," says Iwaniec. That includes Pierre Yovanovitch's Monsieur and Madame Oops dining chairs and a bright turquoise wall installation by Brooklyn-based ceramicist Peter Lane. In other cases, function was the driver. Witness the enormous closet, a sugary confection of bleached oak, brass fittings and pale leather. In the twin daughters' domain, a dresser by artist Khaled El Mays and a voluptuous hand-painted de Gournay wallcovering confirm the level of high-end detail that went into this address. "I think that was part of its success," Iwaniec says.

Fortunately, effort doesn't displace the sly sense of humor Iwaniec managed to slip into every room. In the kitchen, a custom, hand drawn Fornasetti monkey graphic over a sink imparts levity to the impeccably controlled puzzle of walnut and white lacquer cabinets, glass countertops and black and white patterns. In the breakfast room, that job is performed by a jocular quintet of Murano globes from the 1950s. In the living room, six overscale brass flush mount lights by Roman and Williams Guild play with candy-hued artworks by Josh Sperling and Austin Lee and a polka dot glazed ceramic table by Hun-Chung Lee. That ebullience is anchored by the strong shapes of the vintage Theo Ruth lounge chairs, a custom Francesco Perini Incontro coffee table and a bespoke wine-red couch in the style of Royère. "It was important to everybody that there was nothing cookie cutter," says Iwaniec. "I think we achieved that." ■ *Pembroke & Ives, pembrokeandives.com*





