

INTERIOR DESIGN®

SEPTEMBER
2010

new york: in living color



The Three P's

Prewar, penthouse, and Park Avenue are magic words for David Kleinberg

text: alastair gordon

photography: eric lalgnel





A rooftop getaway in the middle of Manhattan is a precious thing alone. But add sophisticated decor that defers to the contemporary-art holdings of two passionate collectors and a panoramic view over the Central Park reservoir to the equation, and the product equals far more than the sum of its impressive parts. "My clients thought it

would be wonderful to entertain up here, almost as if it was their weekend house," David Kleinberg says. That would make their "primary residence" the two stories directly below—where David Kleinberg Design Associates entered the picture a dozen years ago.

At that time, the prewar Park Avenue building's original penthouse triplex was divided, the top level being its own apartment. When Kleinberg's clients bought it and reconnected it with their two lower levels, the 1,000 square feet were cut up into small rooms. "We blew it out," he says. "And left it open as a light-filled box." He also installed floor-to-ceiling windows and French doors around three sides of the perimeter.

That highly contemporary sensibility reflects a significant evolution. It started with lowest level's classic 1980's Mac II interior, which Kleinberg updated. He refurbished several of the existing English and Continental antiques but mixed them with French pieces from the mid-20th century and subtle floor coverings in hand-loomed wool or jute-and-leather. The entry's parquet was striking, doors were paneled mahogany, and the limestone mantel was long and low. When the time came to think about what to put on the walls, Kleinberg—who does not consider himself an art consultant—mentioned a few artists and galleries that interested him personally. The wife "took it up with a vengeance," he says with a laugh. Then, as often happens in the



Previous spread: Standing on the terrace of an Upper East Side penthouse by David Kleinberg Design Associates is David Brooks's sculpture in bronze and wood.

Opposite top: In the living area, seating covered in cotton bouclé surrounds a trio of mirror-polished steel tables. All are custom.

Opposite bottom: The Brooks sculpture overlooks the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Reservoir.

Top, from left: Video art by Ricci Albenda is projected on the wall over the dining area's sideboard by T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbins and terra-cotta sculptures by Nadia Pasquer. The staircase's brass handrail connects blackened-iron balusters. **Bottom,**

from left: Bronze panels surround the living area's fireplace, which displays selenite log sculptures. A side table of hand-forged, silver-leafed iron is fitted with a glass top.






collecting game, many years of researching and contemplating began to send these Upper East Siders in an increasingly experimental direction. Both they and Kleinberg, taking a preliminary walk-through of the penthouse, saw an opportunity to reflect much of their recently acquired art.

Whereas there's a Cubist-inspired oil on canvas by Suzy Frelinghuysen in the living room downstairs, a projector concealed in the ceiling of the penthouse dining area beams a Ricci Albenda video—panning across an abstract architectural space—onto the wall above an ebonized sideboard by T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings. David Brooks, whose work appears in "Greater New York 2010," now ending its run at the Museum of Modern Art's P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, is responsible for the sculpture standing among the potted trees and teak furniture on the penthouse's wraparound terrace: an anthropomorphic bronze pierced by multiple wooden rods in a way that's reminiscent of the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian. In terms of architecture, the best symbol of this shift in sensibility is the staircase's balustrade as it ascends from the apartment's middle level to the penthouse. The blackened-iron balusters start out incorporating a traditional diamond shape; a few feet from the upper landing, that motif disappears in favor of simple uprights. ▶

Laid over the bleached, pickled oak floor, a custom sisal rug anchors the living area.

The stairs deposit people right in the living area, by the fireplace. Kleinberg created a comfortable seating area with a sofa and lounge chairs covered in a cream bouclé. On the braided sisal rug sit a trio of mirror-polished steel cocktail tables with tops shaped like paint splatters. (The shapes were designed on a computer, then blown up and made into templates to be die-cut.) Many of the changes are subtle, the sort hardly noticed on first impression. The bleached and pickled oak floor is new, for example. "That sounds old-fashioned but seems modern again," Kleinberg says. "And it reflects so much light." Recessed ceiling fixtures supplement it.

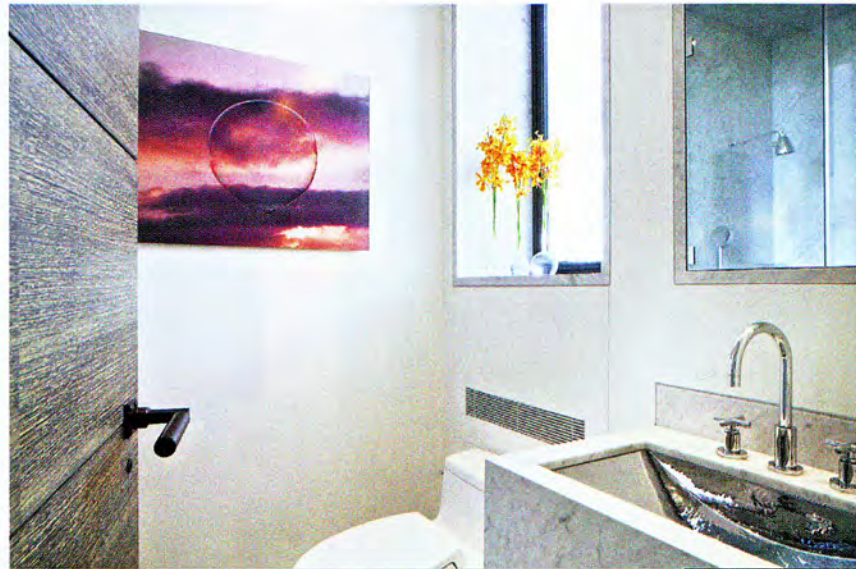
Between the dining area and the galley kitchen, mechanicals and a powder room are housed in a block that clearly had to stay put, so Kleinberg sheathed it in bleached wengé to contrast with the all-white walls and ceiling. "I like the texture and color of wengé," he explains, adding that the bleaching brings out a grainy tactility. A few feet away stands a cross-shape structural column. Kleinberg transformed it into a sculptural element by cladding it in bronze with a dark statuary patination, like the columns of that more famous light-filled box, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion. 

PROJECT TEAM

DUANE DILL, GRACE RAIS: DAVID KLEINBERG DESIGN ASSOCIATES. **PATELLI LANDSCAPES:** LANDSCAPING CONSULTANT. **CURT A. BARAD AUDIO VIDEO SYSTEMS:** AUDIOVISUAL CONSULTANT. **GILSANZ, MURRAY, STEFICEK:** STRUCTURAL ENGINEER. **ADS ENGINEERS:** MEP. **ÉBÉNISTERIE CLASSIQUE:** WOODWORK. **AUTUN CONTRACTORS:** GENERAL CONTRACTOR.

PRODUCT SOURCES

FROM FRONT ANTHONY LAWRENCE-BELFAIR: CUSTOM LOUNGE CHAIRS, SOFA, PILLOWS (LIVING AREA). **GLANT TEXTILES CORPORATION:** CHAIR FABRIC, SOFA FABRIC. **COWTAN & TOUT:** PILLOW FABRIC. **NORBAR FABRIC:** CHAIR TRIM, SOFA TRIM, PILLOW TRIM. **THROUGH LOBEL MODERN:** SIDEBOARD (DINING AREA). **CASSINA:** CHAIRS, TABLE BASE. **DESIRON:** ARMCHAIRS (LIVING AREA). **HOLLY HUNT:** ARMCHAIR CUSHION FABRIC. **HB HOME:** FIREPLACE SCULPTURES. **DESSIN FOURNIR:** SIDE TABLE. **BEAUVAIS CARPETS:** CUSTOM RUG. **WATERWORKS:** SINK (POWDER ROOM). **GALAXY GLASS AND STONE:** CUSTOM TABLETOP (DINING AREA). **AVERY BOARDMAN:** CUSTOM SOFA (BEDROOM). **CALVIN FABRICS:** SOFA FABRIC. **GENESIS UPHOLSTERY:** CUSTOM PILLOWS. **MSK ILLUMINATIONS:** SCONCES. **KINGSLEY-BATE:** FURNITURE (TERRACE).



Opposite top: The powder room's cantilevered marble vanity contains a nickel-plated sink. **Opposite bottom:** In the dining area, Mario Bellini chairs surround a custom table combining a frosted-glass top and an ebonized ash-wood base.

Top, from left: Above the bedroom's custom sofa bed are chromed sconces with enameled metal shades. The bathroom's sink vanity is Calacatta marble. **Bottom, from left:** Teak seating and tables furnish the south-facing terrace. A door clad in bleached wengé opens to the powder room's photograph by Julianne Swartz.