

P

urple has always been a color that connotes royalty and piety, bountiful grapes and spectacular streaks at sunset; it's a part of the spectrum that's lush, saturated and intense. But hues in the family that run the gamut from rich aubergine to tawny wine aren't always the easiest to live with in modern homes, particularly when flowing from room to room.

Manhattan interior designer Amy Lau says she was thrilled to work with a couple whose passion for purple anchored a design scheme for a redesigned pre-war apartment on the Upper East Side, just off Fifth Avenue. Gutting a roomy three-bedroom home to incorporate mostly new furnishings, the clients, a New York City-based real estate developer and his wife, were drawn to the distinctive color range.

"It's not always easy to work with such strong colors and have them subtly capture the eye rather than overwhelm a room," Lau says. "We wanted to introduce textural elements in the purple colorway judiciously, blending them with silvery hues and artful architectural details. It was great fun to explore all the options."

Lau, a "next garde" Chelsea-based designer, with a client list that includes Elvis Costello and Elie Tahari, considers herself primarily a modernist, whose projects often showcase midcentury modern furnishings, shapes and retro color palettes. A cofounder of the Design Miami fair, the sister show to the "art world Super Bowl" that is Art Basel in Miami Beach, Lau is astute about working with contemporary artists and artisans on projects around the world, from Saudi Arabia to the Hamptons.

"With this project, we were working with a different design vocabulary," Lau says. Collaborating with Brooklyn-based Guerin Glass Architects, "we wanted to honor the traditional lines, layout and deep moldings of the apartment, but bridge the gap between contemporary and traditional furnishings."

The impressive introduction to the apartment upon arrival is a long central entry gallery, where a custom wool-and-silk runner showcases a rich, sophisticated tone. The silk threads of the rug and the bold geometric pattern create artwork underfoot that

COLOR OPTIONAL

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NEW YORK CITY INTERIOR DESIGNER AMY LAU WOWS AGAIN
WITH HER LATEST PROJECT. PRINCE WOULD BE PROUD.

Purple Reign

BY WILLIAM WEATHERSBY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK ROSKAMS



catches the light beautifully. Reinterpreting the paneling in the pre-war apartment, a framework of molding complements dove gray wallpaper.

At the end point of the gallery, the adjoining living room shimmers with tones of pearl gray and metallic ice blue. For a modern take on moldings in the vintage apartment, the design team created a picture-frame effect around the fireplace. A white inset surrounding the fireplace is a sculptural stucco swirl of curving lines, blending both matte and polished elements. "It's an abstract, bespoke look that showcases fine artistry," Lau says. A white stone fireplace surround and hearth complement the look. The curves of the wall are echoed in the ribbon-like pattern of a Stephanie Odegard rug. A chair and ottoman have a silver hand-hammered leather effect, while a Robsjohn-Gibbins lounge chair adds style pedigree. The hand-painted pillows by Aviva Stanoff incorporating the beloved plum hues pop off the neutral sofa and chairs, while another aubergine sofa floats in the space. A plaster chandelier hangs overhead as a grace note.

Purple peeks out again in the luscious, lively shade used in the lacquered dining room. Bold moldings frame hand-painted and silver-leafed wallpaper with an abstract willow motif along one wall. The treatment gives the expanse a feeling of panels by Gustav Klimt, Lau says. Other



walls are lacquered a deep purple, while the dining room chairs, which the owners retained from their previous home, are upholstered with crushed velvet, and the back sides are covered in silk. A silver-shaded pendant lamp adds a modern touch.



retreat from the plum hues in the more formal spaces, the warm, intimate media room has a park view, a mahogany-paneled ceiling and men's suiting wall upholstery. "We added the wood ceiling to add some architectural interest to the otherwise small space," Lau says.

Graphic fabrics infuse energy into bedrooms for the three children. The boys' room features wood-framed, ship's-cabin-style beds below a wood shelving unit, with contemporary fabrics mixing blue, silver, yellow and gray abstract prints. The girl's room

features vibrant floral-print draperies that cue the room's mix of lavender, deeper purple, blue and chartreuse (the traditional furniture got a color transfusion of the latter). A pendant light is wrapped with a striped pattern that's echoed in two painted wall stripes that create a border. Meanwhile, the subdued master suite boasts lush, understated textiles, including an undulating upholstered headboard for the king-size bed. Heavenly wallpaper creates a peaceful backdrop. In its reconfigured

master bath, off-white marble walls contrast unexpectedly with earthy, oiled-teak, custom casework.

For a functional yet stylish kitchen, the design team worked with Poggenpohl to create a sleek design that incorporates wood-fronted white cabinetry. A marble-topped Saarinen table is surrounded by wood Morph chairs from Formstelle. Poured terrazzo floors stand up to heavy family traffic.

"This family was fun to work with," Lau says. "We weren't tied to any one style or period of furnishings, and the color samples at every meeting were always truly exuberant sessions." The chic apartment's refinement of the materials—its moldings, custom carpets, plasterwork, textiles and exquisite light fixtures—combine with silvery backdrops to allow those eggplants and lavenders and plums to pop as emboldened streaks of color. Purple reign, indeed. ■

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RUNNER'S WORLD The impressive introduction to the apartment upon arrival is a long central entry gallery, where a custom wool-and-silk runner showcases a rich, sophisticated tone.