

Late Amy Lau's Enduring Design Legacy Is Summed Up in One Highly Personal Project

The AD100 luminary's own New York City home serves as a punctuation mark to an extraordinary life and career—a love letter to the trailblazer's twin muses of art and design

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Amy Lau passed away in January 2025 at the age of 56. The designer's Manhattan apartment, completed just months before her woefully premature death, perfectly captures her incisive eye and her steadfast belief in the ennobling power of great design. It is the final grace note to a singular life spent in the pursuit of beauty and joy.

Surveying Amy Lau's stellar home in New York's historic Alwyn Court, one can't help but lament the loss of one of the design world's most original voices. Amy was a font of optimism and wonder, a champion of art and design placed in the service of a life well-lived. Her apartment brilliantly synthesizes the many threads of her storied career: her virtuosity in marshaling ideal scale, proportion, and shape; her fearless embrace of color as a mode of emotional expression; her refusal to draw artificial distinctions between fine art and fine design; and her drive to conjure interior worlds redolent of curiosity, connoisseurship, and pure delight.

Amy told AD that living in Alwyn Court had been a long-standing dream. "This building holds a special place in my heart. I've passed the landmark countless times over the course of my years in New York City, and I was always captivated by the intricate beauty of its ornate façade," she said. Built between 1907 to 1909, the 12-story tower by architecture firm Harde and Short is easily recognizable for its elaborate terracotta decoration, which includes a crush of cherubs, crests, salamanders, scrolls, and vines. A block from Central Park, the Plaza Hotel, and 5th Avenue's luxury shops, Alwyn Court quickly became one of the city's most expensive addresses after it opened to its first residents. But to Amy, it represented far more than a reputation or a swanky address: It was an opportunity to create "a personal environment that tells my own story" within an icon of New York's design history, she said.

By the time Amy acquired her roughly 950-square-foot, one-bedroom apartment, its original interior detailing had long been stripped away. But, characteristically, where others saw only mute, blank space, Amy saw potential. She soon engaged Michael Schmitt Architect and set out on a gut renovation inspired by the glories of the past and the promise of a bright new future.

Because the building was constructed in the latter years of the Art Nouveau era, Amy tapped into the strong geometries of the contemporaneous Vienna Secession movement, long a source of design inspiration. For the entry, which also serves as a dining room, she found a circa 1902 brass-and-Loetz-glass Secessionist chandelier by the school of Austrian artist Koloman Moser. It hangs above an ombré glass table by the contemporary furniture maker Germans Ermičs alongside ribbon-like chairs by Joseph Walsh. The space is wrapped in a pastel watercolor ground with gold metallic flecks, courtesy of a wallpaper that Amy created for Fromental. Underfoot throughout the home is chevron-patterned flooring with a walnut inlay, crafted by LV Wood to “honor the era’s aesthetic while infusing the apartment with a timeless, yet contemporary, feeling,” Amy explained.

Moving from this ethereal space into the living room, the design becomes grounded by desert hues—clay, marigold, ochre, and pale teal feature in a bespoke patchwork rug by Kyle Bunting—which Amy incorporated into her practice as an homage to her upbringing in Northern Arizona and her passion for nature. Weighty wood pieces, like the Mozambique fireplace surround and American black walnut cocktail table, both carved in a swirling pattern by Massachusetts-based sculptor Michael Coffey, underscore the earthy, organic ambience. At the same time, the sinuous lines of a custom Vladimir Kagan armchair, a leafy drinks table by artist Franck Evennou, and another antique Secessionist chandelier keep the curated salon light and inviting. The eclectic mix staves off any hint of bland period orthodoxy, culminating in a space that testifies to Amy’s insistence on rooms “where beauty and function coexist seamlessly,” as she put it. In the bathroom and kitchen, sumptuous marbles are given space to display their natural beauty, while the bedroom offers a candy-colored blast of comfort, with blue-and-white curtains and curvaceous, marshmallow-y furnishings.

Despite the somewhat limited square footage, each room in the apartment is an entire world unto itself, a space for inspiration and reflection, intellectual nourishment and visceral joy. Indeed, joy is the *mot juste* in describing Amy’s life and work. We could rhapsodize endlessly about her immaculate taste and talent, but it is that ineffable sense of *joie de vivre* that is her enduring legacy.



Massachusetts-based sculptor [Michael Coffey](#) originally created the living room's Mozambique wood fireplace surround for Amy's Salon Art + Design booth in 2017. An ottoman by Joseph Walsh for Philippe Hetier stands in front of the fireplace by [Hearth Cabinet](#).



A series of oil paintings by Lucien Bélière hangs over the living room's [Harvey Probbler sectional](#) with pillows by [Judy Ross Textiles](#). American black walnut cocktail table by Michael Coffey; vintage walnut dresser (right); custom rug by [Kyle Bunting](#).



The Bulthaup kitchen features appliance by Gaggenau, Arabescato Corchia marble countertops and walls from Artistic Tile were fabricated and installed by JV Stone Design, and an Art Nouveau brass chandelier overhead. Louis Majorelle wood tray; ceramic vessel by Bela Silva from Maison Gerard.



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A vintage Creaciones Gobesso mirror and a pair of 1960s Schneider candlesticks from Amy Lau Design Gallery decorate the top of a custom cabinet by Caleb Woodard in the entry.



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A vintage Scheurich ceramic floor vase and an abstract artwork from 1975 signed Raúl decorate the hallway with LV Wood flooring. Hardware throughout by Hamilton Sinkler.



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A Vienna Secessionist–style Koloman Moser chandelier, attributed to Bakalowits & Sohne, sets the stage for the living room’s design, which is filled with a mix of statement-making wood furnishings, cozy upholstered pieces, and Amy Lau’s beloved earthen color palette.



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Titled *Poliarte*, a metal-and-Murano glass artwork by [Longobard](#) commands attention in a corner of the living room, where it stands between a mirrored room divider and a sofa upholstered in Rosemary Hallgarten's [Laria fabric](#) by [Master of Furniture Services](#). The room's bespoke rug is by [Kyle Bunting](#) and the custom shades are by [Erik Bruce](#).



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In the entry–dining room, chairs by Joseph Walsh surround an ombre glass table by Germans Ermičs, which stands under a circa 1902 brass and Loetz glass Secessionist chandelier by the school of Koloman Moser. Wallpaper by Amy Lau for Fromental; rug by Rosemary Hallgarten.



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To wrap the primary bedroom, Lau designed a bespoke wallpaper with Fromental inspired by the work of American artist Alma Thomas and the look of embroidery. Custom nightstands by Amorph and sconces by Olivia Barry flank the bed with a headboard covered in Kravet's Curly polyester fur and a West Elm blanket. Dedar fabrics make the custom window treatments by Erik Bruce and cover the Ernst Schwadron wingback chair. Chandelier by Atlas; cashmere rug by Azadi Fine Rugs.



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The bathroom is clad in a Silver Wave marble from Artistic Tile, fabricated and installed by JV Stone Design; Amuneal designed the bespoke bookmatched vanity and the medicine cabinet. Fixtures by Kallista.