

CURTAIN CALL

DESIGNER AMY LAU PULLS OUT ALL THE STOPS FOR THE FOURTH HOME SHE HAS DESIGNED FOR LONGTIME CLIENTS: A LIGHT-FILLED AERIE ON NEW YORK'S UPPER EAST SIDE.

WRITTEN BY JENNIFER SERGENT
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSHUA MCHUGH

INTERIOR DESIGN / AMY LAU, AMY LAU DESIGN
ARCHITECTURE / ROBERT LUNTZ,
RESOLUTION: 4 ARCHITECTURE
HOME BUILDER / MARK DOBBIN AND BREANDAN
TIMOTHY, HIGH LINE CONSTRUCTION GROUP



Left: Near the entrance a sculpture by an unknown artist, circa 1950, sits in front of a painting by another unknown artist that was purchased from Gaspare Asaro-Italian Modern.

Opposite: Designer Amy Lau repeated the same patterns and color throughout the apartment—for example, in a custom metallic-ceramic wall sculpture by Clara Graziolino, *Temporale*, over the dining room sideboard and on a custom Kyle Bunting hide rug in the entry hall. Rich paneling by Resolution: 4 Architecture frames the view.

This time, it had to be extra special,” designer Amy Lau says. Not that the three previous residences she had decorated for two of her dearest clients weren’t memorable, but this particular New York apartment, with wraparound terraces that enjoy broad views of Gracie Mansion and the East River, would probably be these homeowners’ last big project with Lau, since they planned to stay here for good. “She’s a design junkie—she’s got the best eye ever,” Lau says of the wife. “So if this was going to be our final collaboration, I said, ‘Let’s take it to the next level.’”

The opportunity presented itself when the second apartment on the owners’ floor became available, and they snapped it up to transform it into their main living area, with the existing apartment reserved for guests and the husband’s office and piano studio. The new place

hadn’t been touched in at least 30 years, the wife says, “so every single wall in the apartment came down.” While architect Robert Luntz worked on a new open-plan layout, the wife gathered inspiration from her vast collection of European design magazines—though after 16 years of friendship, she says, “Before I open my mouth, Amy knows what I’m looking for.”

Indeed, Lau knew where to go once the wife brought out a painting she had purchased but never hung: a midcentury abstract full of blue and turquoise hues. “I fell in love with the colors in this painting,” Lau recalls, “and I felt as though the entire design direction should be built around this artwork.”

Though blue had never figured in the owners’ other homes—their country home, paradoxically, is ablaze in orange and red hues—the wife embraced the cooler palette because she felt it would reflect the colors of the



A custom oil by James Kennedy and a Paul Evans-style lamp from Metro Retro Furniture add Brutalist flair to the living room, along with custom bronze coffee tables by Silas Seandel. The sofa is by Vladimir Kagan, and the Italian armchairs are vintage. A custom Dandong wild-silk rug by Janis Provisor for Fort Street Studio completes the setting.

river and horizon outside the apartment's sprawling windows. The wife also expressed a desire for Brutalist-style furnishings. "My mind was evolving to things that were more architectural, more sculptural," she explains. "Here, it's a city dwelling, and you're looking at chimneys; you're looking at factories across the river in Long Island City. That evokes the raw feeling of Brutalism." Other requirements were to incorporate the Scheidts' collection of African relics and sculpture and to bring more ceramic art and accessories into the mix.

In response, Lau commissioned a series of unforgettable site-specific artworks and decor. She first approached Fort Street Studio to create two Dandong wild-silk rugs for the long, narrow living area where that key painting now hangs. "The patterns in the rugs look like they were formed by brushstrokes, like watercolor," she says. "They are basically an homage to that painting." Custom cashmere, wool and mohair throw pillows by textile designer Lauren Saunders are a more literal translation of the painting, and the effect shows up again in a hair-on-hide rug in the nearby entry hall. Lau employed similar combinations in the master suite with luminous ombré draperies and handmade Italian tiles commissioned for the shower. From one end of the apartment to the other, she explains, "I love that you do one thing, and it echoes in different places with different materials and different forms."

The designer was more judicious with the heavier Brutalist accents—most notably a Paul Evans coffee table with a sculpted black-metal base and an oversize floor lamp from Evans' era, both which stand out against the living room's neutral palette. She extended those neutrals

A midcentury painting by Mildred Hurwitz that the wife found on 1stdibs sets the tone for the apartment's design. Lau placed it in the living room over a midcentury chest by Gio Ponti for Singer & Sons and paired it with vintage Italian ceramics and a bronze-and-agate lamp by Willy Daro.



Two load-bearing wall panels form a niche where Lau placed a burnt orange chair and ottoman by Warren Platner on a natural cowhide rug. A painting by Sydney Butchkes hangs behind the vignette.



Above: Lau commissioned Malcolm Hill to paint a mural in the kitchen's white, gray and beige palette. She then designed an installation of Vibia's Puck lighting above the marble island, which is capped by Dennis Miller Associates' Alto barstools.

Right: A three-panel multilayered cast-bronze screen by Silas Seandel defines the dining area, where a circa 1960 Kalmr Granada chandelier hangs over a table with vintage Mastercraft brass bases from Sjae Alexandre in Los Angeles and a glass top fabricated by Depp Glass. The chairs are by Carlo de Carli.





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For her study, the wife requested her favorite color—red—which shows up in the Manuel Canovas Marius upholstery on the Warren Platner lounge chair and on the 1970s Paul Kingma coffee table with tomato red ceramic art, contrasting stone and brass inlays. The *Universe* quartet of ceramic panels is by Shizue Imai.

through the dining area and into the kitchen, a study in white, beige and gray that is dominated by a Malcolm Hill mural. “I just totally wanted to do a mural, no ifs, ands or buts,” Lau says. “I thought one monolithic piece, rather than little pictures along the wall, would be fantastic.” She then arranged cloud-like lights over the island with help from builders Mark Dobbin and Breandan Timothy. “The design team had full-scale mockups and paper templates. From there, we were able to identify where the junction boxes would go,” Timothy says, noting that the designers’ meticulous preparation paid off. “The whole effect is almost lunar-looking.”

Equally meticulous was the way in which Lau sourced Italian and German ceramics to display among her clients’ African art collection on custom shelves in the master bedroom. “Each little piece is a jewel,” she says. The room’s custom Moroccan rug, custom bedding and upholstered wall complement the tableau.

The best part of the two-year renovation, as it turned out, came last. It took Lau nearly that long to persuade her clients to go for an installation dividing the dining and living areas: a lacy three-panel screen made from layers of cast bronze. “It’s the *pièce de résistance*,” she says of metalsmith Silas Seandel’s sculpture. A fitting tribute, one might say, to so many years of creativity and creation between a designer and her cherished clients. ■

A custom teak-framed bed by Edward Ferrell + Lewis Mittman in the master bedroom is covered in linens by Knoll Luxe. The custom rug by ALT for Living complements the lines of the Art Nouveau armchair by Henry van de Velde.



Below, left: Lau sourced German and Italian ceramics on multiple antique-buying trips to place among the owners' collection of African sculpture and artifacts, which are framed within the master bedroom's custom shelving.

Below, right: An Eames lounge chair and ottoman rest in the bedroom nook alongside draperies by Erik Bruce Fabrik using hand-dyed Aquata fabric by Carolyn Ray. The floor lamp is by Jean Rispal, and the live-edge accent table is by George Nakashima.

