

high CONTRAST

Designer and collector Julie Hillman juxtaposes the intellectual and the sensual in her art-filled Park Avenue prewar

INTERIOR DESIGN JULIE HILLMAN DESIGN
ARCHITECTURE DAVID H. ARELOW AIA/ARELOW SHERMAN ARCHITECTS
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FORM FOLLOWS passion

Julie Hillman gutted her prewar apartment to create an interior respectful of its roots, but more compatible with her collection of modern and contemporary furniture, art, and decorative objects. A gray painting by Jerald Leans (b. 1970) dominates one living room wall; a marble mantel found in Brussels claims another. Sconce and table sculpture, Georges Jouve (1910-1964).

IMPORTANT artwork

"What makes art 'important,'" says Hillman, "is that you love living with it." Bottom left: A Miro drawing. Below: A stainless-steel sculpture, by Beverly Pepper (b. 1922), and a mirror in an antique frame. Right: Behind a purple sofa of Hillman's design, Vera Lutter's progressive flower photographs (2009). Opposite page: Hendrik Kersten's (b. 1956) photographic portrait of his daughter, Paula, in a hoodie pays homage to the masters. Tufted daybed, Andre Arbus (1903-1989). Standing vellum lamp, Tobia Scarpa (b. 1935).





TOTAL-GUT RENOVATIONS ARE NOT FOR THE GUTLESS. IT TAKES vision—and artistic sensitivity—to bring a dysfunctional space down to its bones, then lead it back to the future with its heart and soul intact. Julie Hillman managed the job admirably in her own Park Avenue apartment, a prewar that had undergone so many misguided renovations over the decades that its architectural attributes were all but smothered in a series of too small, too dark, too cluttered rooms connected by narrow corridors.

For Hillman, who felt at home in the building and the location, but uncomfortable in the outdated apartment, excavating the interior and rebuilding the space from floorboards to ceiling beams was a sensible solution. And she spoke from experience.



artful SIMPLICITY

Opposite, clockwise from bottom left: The entry hall spotlights a pair of Jean Royère sconces; the table is 1940s French, by Gilbert Poillerat and Jacques Adnet. In the library, a photograph from Sam Samore's *Allegories of Beauty* series (1990s); Robert Couturier sofa, and Willy Rizzo coffee table. The Serge Mouille ceiling fixture is a rarity in white, *armoire*, Rafael. This page: The hall's Verner Panton lights (c.1969) were salvaged from the Spiegel building in Germany; the box is by Le Corbusier, who viewed architects as creators of cubes ready to be filled "with everything you dream of."



CONTEMPORARY current

This page: A solar-shaped foam sculpture and a painting by Gabriella Machado (b. 1960) pop against the dining room's gray walls. Vessels by Ron Arad and Marc Newson. Opposite, top: "I wanted a kitchen that didn't look like a kitchen," says Hillman. Vintage French oak floors, subway-tile ceiling. Opposite, bottom: Studs detail a bathroom door.



Educated in fashion design at Parsons, Hillman originally made her living in the clothing business. "But when my husband and I had our second child, we started to build a house in the Hamptons, and I found that I loved everything about the process of designing a house from the ground up." A passionate collector of 20th-century modern and contemporary art, Hillman herself became a talented sculptor of space. Examining at vacuum, she resists the impulse to fill it up, choosing instead to make each room a gallery unto itself, where creature comforts and carefully curated furnishings bring vitality and memories.





"When I work with new clients who are not natural-born collectors, I always start by saying: 'Show me what you love. We will put all the things you love together.' What I do for them, I do for myself as a collector," says Hillman. In this space, as in much of her professional work, Hillman worked in partnership with architect David Abelow, of the firm Abelow Sherman, to open up doorways, widen passageways, and raise the ceilings—giving the space the open feeling of a loft, but with the structure and classical proportions of a prewar. They introduced moldings and millwork and chevron-patterned floors, fabricated from an-

tique French oak. And then came the art—not in a truckload or container delivered from a single showroom—but piece by piece, from existing collections and new discoveries made on trips, at auction, in galleries, and in their travels.

Textiles—silk-and-wool rugs, satin curtains, and graphic black-and-white kilims—frame the pieces in the context of home. "For our children, art and collecting are a way of life," says Hillman. "They have grown up to appreciate 'stuff' for the pleasure it brings, and the memories they hold. They pay attention. The things we love are our history." — See Resources.



PERSONAL possessions

Opposite page: Rob Wynne's *Possessed* (poured and mirrored glass) makes a statement in the master bath. This page: A fur throw from J. Mendel covers a bed designed by Hillman, who lifted the piece up on giant metal feet she found in Paris. Drawing over desk, Henry Moore. Plaster lamp, Jean-Michel Frank. Photographs, Sophie Calle (b. 1953). Rugs throughout, Rug & Kilim.