

JUST



French modernism was the stylistic starting point for this New York apartment designed by Stephen Miller Siegel. But punctuating the space are complementary finds from around the world, including a gilt-lacquer screen from the Chinese Porcelain Company, Roman sculpture from Fortuna Fine Arts and a Moroccan Touareg mat from F.J. Hakimian. Ralph Lauren Paint has been used throughout.

STYLED BY JEN EVERETT

RIGHT



Town & Country
tailor-makes
an apartment
for the times.

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CHANGE IS OFTEN GOOD. But when change comes with unsettling speed or is basically unsettling in itself, we all tend to react in the same way: we want to be close to home. The apartment on these pages, created by Stephen Miller Siegel for *Town & Country*, is a place that sums up many of the ideas surfacing in interior design right now. And highest on the list is probably the premise that living spaces should deliver emotional satisfaction, not glitzy special effects. Design being a microcosm of the world as a whole, it's safe to say that slickness and excess are on the way out, reality is on the way in, and comfort and authenticity will be the preoccupations of the decorating profession for the foreseeable future.

"Design is a pendulum that swings from one extreme to the other," says Siegel, a New Yorker who's witnessed a few of those arcs since 1981, the year he arrived in the offices of Peter Marino, fresh out of architecture school. In partnering with *T&C* on this project, Siegel, who's headed his own firm since 1992, assumed he would be contributing his expertise in architecture and design. But it proved to be his rather obsessive knowledge of the decorative arts that elevated the results pictured here to such a high level.

The magazine got things going by providing Siegel with a fictional client, a worldly woman starting over in a new Manhattan neighborhood with a few of her favorite things in tow. After twenty years in a downtown loft, she's opted for the cozier surroundings of a one-bedroom apartment on the Upper East Side. The 1,153-square-foot space is in a new thirty-one-story building called the Laurel, on East 67th Street. Typical of high-quality residential construction around the country, the Laurel has shared amenities that offset the small size of the units relative to similarly priced prewar



A foyer (left) takes on high drama with the addition of a Ming-period Chinese chest from Gracie. Vintage Japanese textiles and French trim turn pillows (top) into functional art. In the dining area (opposite), Rosenthal's Magic Flute White porcelain and Christofle's Vertigo flatware complete the tea setting on a 1950s mahogany table by Leleu from Maison Gerard. The Murano-glass chandelier is from Bernd Goeckler. Argentum Weave Silver fabric from Ralph Lauren Home covers both the banquette and the wall behind it; the photography installation was handled by New York City's ILevel.





Coral and green, which appear as accent colors elsewhere in the apartment, become major players in the living room (above). Holly Hunt cowhide in kiwi green and coral lambskin from Global Leather cover seating designed by Siegel. A Benedict Tatti wood sculpture (ca. 1950) on the mantel is from James Graham & Sons, as are the contemporary ceramics on the low table. At the other end of the room (opposite), *Reclining Nude* (ca. 1920), by Arthur Bowen Davies, from Berry-Hill Galleries, hangs above a sofa covered in silk from Ralph Lauren Home. The round table, a Porteneuve design (ca. 1935), is from Maison Gerard.

meals around a small table in a dining area off the entry hall as well as seated buffets for up to sixteen guests in the living room, served from the galley-style kitchen. Assessing the furniture she already has, he finds she's made some shrewd buys from Greenwich Village antiques dealers over the years that should travel uptown very well. There are a handsome grouping of French tables from the early-to mid-20th century, assembled from Benoist F. Drut and Gerard Widdershoven, of Maison Gerard; a choice Chinese chest with mother-of-pearl accents from Gracie, a fourth-generation specialist in Asian furnishings; and a 1930s Murano-glass chandelier of exceptional quality from the shop of Bernd Goeckler.

"I'm a big proponent of repurposing," says Siegel, "and not just because it's a smart move right now. Objects that have authenticity and meaning make a room seem undecorated and more natural." Such pieces also give him insights into a new client's tastes, which then become clues to the direction the rest of

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apartments (this unit is priced at \$1.77 million). The building's perks include a children's game room, a catering kitchen, and a gym and pool outfitted with triathlon training equipment. But its biggest asset, as far as *T&C's* make-believe client is concerned, is its location within walking distance of some of the best decorative-arts shopping in the world.

First things first: Siegel works up a furniture plan based on how his client might use her new place. Entertaining at home will be important to her, he decides, as it is increasingly for many of his other clients. He gives her the flexibility to host





the interior might take. From this particular collection, he deduces the following: his newly uptown client favors classical design filtered through the lens of European modernism (the French tables, the Murano chandelier), as well as historically driven examples of ornament (the Chinese chest). Knowing how much quality matters to her, he steers the balance of the furnishings in the apartment toward art and antiques that will hold their value and build on the stylistic signature she has developed. He looks for individual pieces priced at less than \$100,000; most items come in significantly below that.

Siegel inventories the gaps that need filling and heads out to some of his favorite galleries in the Laurel's neighborhood. Shopping for one-of-a-kind objects takes time and, often, serendipity, whereas the upholstered furniture the designer usually commissions to round out a project comes with a reliable delivery date. And so he starts with the antiques. Six dealers make his list: the Chinese Porcelain Company, for Asian antiques; Didier Aaron, for French art and antiques; James Graham & Sons, for traditional to contemporary painting and ceramics; Berry-Hill Galleries, for 19th- and 20th-century American paintings; Fortuna Fine Arts, for antiquities; and F.J. Hakimian, for centuries' worth of carpets. These eclectic stops will yield copacetic pieces because, as Siegel points out, objects





In the bedroom the straw-colored palette of the apartment deepens with the introduction of a patterned wool carpet from Megerian (a favorite of Matilda, an Italian greyhound) and a caramel-colored raw-silk curtain fabric from Ralph Lauren Home. Linens on the antique ebonized-mahogany bed are Gosford Solid Egyptian cotton from Charisma. Opposite, top left: Charisma towels join Waterworks accessories in the master bath. Opposite, top right: A Christofle silver frame and a silver-plate thermos and tray top the capiz-shell dressing table. The painting reflected in the mirror is Marsden Hartley's *Movement, Sails* (1916), from Berry-Hill Galleries. Opposite, bottom: The closet holds an ivory-and-burlwood Cosmopolitan safe from Traum. Clothes from Lafayette 148, clothes and accessories from Salvatore Ferragamo and furs from Pologeorgis hang above an Hermès Pippa stool. For shopping information on furnishings and art, see page 130.

Have You Met Miss Jones?

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the exhortation Jones says he gave her at the time: “Trust me.” Jones’s character has now blossomed into one of *Mad Men*’s most compelling story lines; in fact, she made a pivotal announcement in the final episode of season two, which closed with a tension-filled scene featuring Betty and Don. “Matt has told me he’s never been afraid to give me difficult material,” Jones says with pride.

“I enjoy my transformation into Betty,” she continues. “It’s therapeutic to put on someone else’s life.” The scripts arrive just a few days before filming, and on set, Jones undergoes an hour and a half of hair, makeup and wardrobe preparations before filming begins (sometimes making for sixteen-hour days) on AMC’s stage four, which is the Draper home, or on stage two, which is Sterling Cooper, Weiner’s fictitious ad-agency headquarters. “There are girdles and garters, stockings and pointy bras and petticoats.... It all makes you walk differently,” she says. Even the actors’ fitness regimens fall under scrutiny. “We’re not supposed to have any muscle tone.... Women didn’t work out then.” Fortunately, diet doesn’t appear to play an integral part in how Jones maintains her slim physique: at lunch she heartily enjoys a plateful of food and washes it down with classic Coca-Cola. “I hate gyms,” she adds, “but I love tennis, hiking and anything else that gets me outdoors.”

Jones doesn’t think her life has changed much since the show’s popularity took off. “Growing up in a small town, you can relate to the impact an actor has on viewers, but you don’t think much about the movie-star aspect of the business,” she says. “That wasn’t what drew me to acting, and, happily, I’m not readily recognized on the street. We all look so different in our real lives than on the show; it’s easy to stay under the radar. But I love that viewers respond so strongly to Betty and the other characters. What Betty is going through is so relevant for today. We all want authentic fulfillment and to really know the people in our lives.” ❧

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that share similar positions on the pendulum of design (basically sobriety at one end, exuberance at the other) tend to speak to one another across the centuries. Sometimes quite literally: “Japanese aesthetics influenced French designers of the 1920s and 1930s,” he notes, “and I love mixing Japanese textiles or lacquerware with ’30s French furniture.”

That particular combination animates an otherwise fairly neutral apartment. Siegel’s characteristic restraint with color—in this case, he works with variations on straw and silver—keeps the emphasis on the quality of individual objects. He favors using just a few fabrics in multiple ways and often relies heavily on Ralph Lauren Home, as he’s done here.

“Ralph Lauren’s natural-fiber weaves are of really beautiful quality, and the range it offers is broad,” the designer says.

“I can find sheer linens for undercurtains, raw silks for upholstery, and eccentric accent fabrics, like the amazing silver mesh we used in the dining area.”

By limiting his material choices to just a few—the same raw silk serves as living-room curtains and upholstery for both sofas, for instance, and the grass cloth on the bedroom walls continues right down the main hall—Siegel conveys the philosophy of an architect by training who just happened to find himself exceedingly good at decorating. It boils down to this: a home should have spatial integrity, provide function and comfort, and offer value and meaning. These virtues, achievable even in changing times, can be delightfully sustaining. *For more information on the Laurel condominium, located at 400 East 67th Street, in New York City, visit laurelcondominium.com.* ❧

Essential Ingredients: Antiques

Like many top designers, STEPHEN MILLER SIEGEL divides his furniture shopping among the new, the custom-made and the antique. And he’s especially fond of the last category. “Antiques bring an irreplaceable sense of luxury, history and seriousness to my work,” he says. “I couldn’t design a great room without them.” Siegel makes several trips a year to London and Paris, where he buys both for clients and for a small shop he maintains on East 61st Street, in New York. Don’t his projects keep him busy enough? “I have a storefront,” the designer admits, “because I can’t stop buying things.”

What he looks for in an antique: “It’s visceral for me, not intellectual. I always advise people to be true to what they love. In these times it can be hard for me to put trust in an antiques dealer I’m not familiar with. But I’ve learned how to look by now. If a piece is 18th century and veneered, the veneer is usually quite thick, for instance. Old mahogany grain differs from new. And time takes its toll. If a piece looks too perfect, I’m suspicious. Maybe it’s just been overrestored, but I usually pass.”

On mixing versus matching styles: “Lots of designers like things that don’t relate [to one another], but I’m not one of them. What’s interesting to me is to use antiques that are from different times but that have a relationship, like Japanese decorative arts and French design of the 1920s and 1930s; I love to mix the two. Or Ming-period Chinese with English 18th century, or French Rococo with the designs of the 1950s.”

On brown versus black: “Antiques in different shades of brown are great together, and black and brown are good, too. Both approaches prevent a room from getting too matchy, which makes it look like a hotel suite. One exception: a room filled only with black furniture can be fabulous. I’ve been known to ebonize a brown antique to make it work in a black room.”

When new is better than old: “Well, antique sofas aren’t always so comfortable, but it’s possible to rebuild them. And antique bed frames that are too small can be widened. Wait, I’ve got one: wall-to-wall carpeting. That’s always better new.”