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TALL ORDER

WHEN MODEL HANA SOUKUPOVA AND HER HUSBAND, DREW AARON, MOVE TO AN APARTMENT HIGH ABOVE MANHATTAN, THEY DISCOVER A WHOLE NEW VIEW OF LIFE

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Drew Aaron figured he knew almost everything there was to know about the luxurious midtown Manhattan high rise he'd been living in for nearly a decade. Aaron bought his first apartment in the 90-story Trump World Tower, across the street from the United Nations, when it was still on the drawing board. He spent his single, club-hopping years trading up from one apartment to another in the bronze-glass skyscraper, which was the tallest residential tower in the city when it was built. He knew its quirks, every square inch of the health club, all the layouts. "I considered myself an expert on what was possible here," he says.

Then, in 2005, Aaron, who is president of a family-owned paper-distribution company headquartered in Philadelphia, met the young Czech model Hana Soukupova. "It took me over three months to get a first



FACING PAGE: Drew Aaron and his wife, model Hana Soukupova, in their Manhattan apartment, which was designed by Mark Cunningham; the architecture is by Michael Gilmore. **THIS PAGE:** In the living room, a painting by Jean-Michel Basquiat hangs above a custom-made sofa by Cunningham, which is flanked by Willy Rizzo lamps; the cocktail table is by Michel Boyer, the red leather-top side table is by André Sornay, the rug is by Sacco Carpet, and the prints in the library and entry are by Andy Warhol. See Resources.



Cactus Wind, a 1983 metal sculpture by Isamu Noguchi, is displayed on an André Sornay table in the living room. **FACING PAGE:** The entry's Italian light fixture by Barovier e Toso and console by André Sornay both date from the 1930s; the steel stools are midcentury, and the tar-and-spackle painting is by Donald Sultan. See Resources.





Andy Warhol's 1985 images of iconic corporate logos are displayed in the mahogany-paneled media room; the sectional is upholstered in a Rogers & Goffigon fabric, the throw is by Hermès, the 1970s cocktail table is by Paul Legeard, and the 1964 molded-fiberglass Half and Half chair is by Christian Germanaz. **FACING PAGE:** *Ruth Smoking*, a light installation by Julian Opie, hangs next to a pair of World War II binoculars mounted on a tripod. See Resources.



date," he recalls. "But after our first dinner together—which lasted more than four hours—we both knew it was meant to be." A year later the couple were married, and soon thereafter they bought a three-bedroom apartment on the 77th floor, with unfettered views of the East River and most of the city. And that sparked a journey of discovery for both of them.

"This will probably be our last apartment before we start a family, so we wanted to push the boundaries—ours and the apartment's," Aaron says. "We wanted to go outside of what was just comfortable." They informed the designer they chose, Mark Cunningham, they craved an elegant yet informal space that would set off their art collection, which includes works by Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Soukupova spends much of her time on fashion shoots around the world or on catwalks for such labels as Gucci and Dior. She's hardly a homebody, but she did want a big kitchen. Neither of them knew much about furnishings, but they were eager to learn.

The first thing Cunningham and project manager Alex Gaston did, working with architect Michael Gilmore, was reclaim space in the 3,000-square-foot apartment. Gaston, who has worked in real estate, knew that developers of new buildings tend to emphasize sellable floor space, which means they sometimes



The light fixture in the library is by Maison Charles, and the red painted-steel sculpture is by Alexander Liberman. **FACING PAGE, FROM LEFT:** The living room has views of the Chrysler and Empire State buildings, the East and Hudson rivers, and the Statue of Liberty; the print is by Andy Warhol. Aaron and Soukupova in the kitchen with Lily, their French bulldog puppy; Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* are displayed over painted-wood cabinets with hardware by the Nanz Company; the refrigerator is by Sub-Zero, and the pendant lights are vintage. See Resources.



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drop ceilings and conceal useful corners. The team discovered space above the ceiling and was able to raise the height of most rooms from eight and a half feet to 12. The demolition also uncovered places for artful, near-invisible storage. "That was awesome," says Aaron, "because my wife and I are control freaks and don't like to have anything lying around."

The layout was reconfigured to better suit a young couple. One bedroom was turned into a spacious library. The dining room became a media room. The kitchen, once standard issue, is now lofty and gleaming. The master bedroom was combined with another bedroom to make a grand suite. Soukupova is "the least materialistic person I know," Aaron says, but he wanted her to have a closet "like the one in the first *Sex*

and the City movie," so Cunningham made her a hide-away with suede-lined cubbies for her designer bags.

Though Aaron and Soukupova were neophytes, they had long been tearing images out of magazines. They handed these over to Cunningham, along with DVDs of the movies *A Perfect Murder* and *The Game*, whose sets they admired, and photos of favorite hotel rooms. "I stay in a lot of hotels," Soukupova says, "and they are nice, but it's not the same as a real home."

"They were comfortable learning a new vocabulary," says Cunningham, "and open to the underlying message." At first the couple didn't want gray hues, but after the designer created a series of inspiration boards, they gravitated to exactly that palette—soft



The sitting area of the master bedroom includes a painting by Christopher Wool and a metal-and-acrylic armchair by Paolo Pallucco and Mireille Rivier. **FACING PAGE, FROM TOP:** A Damien Hirst painting hangs above a custom-made leather bed by Mark Cunningham; the 1930s desk of Bakelite and stainless steel is by Donald Deskey, the walls are covered in a Romo fabric, and the photograph is by David LaChapelle. In the master bath, a vintage '40s chair, a lacquered-glass stool from DDC, and sconces by Ralph Lauren Home; the print is by Andy Warhol. See Resources.



tones that let their bold artworks speak, energized by shots of red and orange.

Because the apartment is relatively spare, each piece the couple chose would have huge import. They initially balked at incorporating vintage furnishings. Aaron shakes his head at the memory: "I thought, People have used this furniture—why would I want it? And my idea of antiques was a lot of ornate, old-fashioned stuff." But Cunningham introduced them to French midcentury style and industrial design. "I told them I didn't want the place to look like a showroom," he explains. A glass-and-steel cocktail table by Michel Boyer converted them. "I had always thought a cocktail table was a slab with four legs, period," Aaron says. "That table was a revelation." And thanks to Gaston, the couple discovered André Sornay; more than a dozen of his pieces now punctuate the apartment. "I'm pretty intense, and I tend to get fixated on things," Aaron says. "So for a while it was all Sornay, all the time." The light fixtures are also crucial. They include a ten-foot-long crystal design in the entry and a 400-pound steel fixture above Aaron's desk.

"This has been more than just a project, more than just making an apartment," Aaron says. "It opened us up to a whole new world, a new way of thinking." ■