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The Next CHAPTER

A DESIGN TEAM MERGES TWO NEW YORK CITY
APARTMENTS TO ACCOMMODATE A GROWING FAMILY.

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ARCHITECTURE / JOHN B. MURRAY, JOHN B. MURRAY ARCHITECT
INTERIOR DESIGN / MARK CUNNINGHAM AND ALEX GASTON, MARK CUNNINGHAM INC.
HOME BUILDER / SYD WOLFE, MELISSA KARTZMAN AND STEVE SACRIPANTI, INTERIOR MANAGEMENT

Things happen for a reason, as the saying goes. So seemed to be the case for a young family that began to outgrow its Central Park West apartment in both size and style. But timing was on their side. The space next door came on the market, and the husband and wife were keen to combine it with theirs into a newly expanded family home.

“They now had an additional 2,200 square feet to play with,” architect John B. Murray says of the purchase. Having completed renovations to the family’s original apartment almost a decade ago, Murray was a natural fit for the project, as he was well versed in both the couple’s aesthetic and the building’s structural intricacies. Working with builders Syd Wolfe, Melissa Kartzman and Steve Sacripanti, Murray stripped the apartment bare. “As we redesigned the interiors for this new combined residence, it became a comprehensive redo to the point that nothing remained,” the architect says.

“The apartment was pretty much taken down to the studs,” explains Kartzman. “That allowed us to really get it right.” Presented with a blank slate, the couple opted to push the direction of the new, supersized space in a lighter and brighter direction that could accommodate daily family life as well as sophisticated entertaining. Also on the design agenda: interiors that combined the husband’s traditional tastes with the wife’s penchant for modern.

Murray laid the foundation for this delicate balance by scaling back on certain architectural details to achieve a

more contemporary feel, such as in the doorways, where he went with bevels rather than classic moldings. The same concept is evident in the living room. “There’s a blend of both traditional and contemporary styles,” says Wolfe of the design decision. “There’s crown molding, but it’s dropped, so it’s a floating crown molding, which is more of a modern detail.” To complement Murray’s unique framework, the owners called upon interior designers Mark Cunningham and Alex Gaston in the project’s early stages. “The clients are a fun couple with a young spirit,” Cunningham says. “So while they wanted the apartment to be sophisticated, they also wanted it to reflect that part of their personality.”

A top priority was incorporating their impressive collection of modern art. “We were really conscious of using the art in a purposeful way as opposed to just matching it with colors in a contrived manner,” says Gaston. In a shift from the browns and tans that dominated the apartment’s previous incarnation, he created a “livable art gallery,” introducing a contemporary palette of silvery gray, black and white. The living room was planned around a large Tara Donovan drawing containing tones of white and silver. “We knew it would go there because of the scale and how much everybody liked it,” says Cunningham, “so that was an inspiration for us.”

Larger works also live in the entry gallery directly off the foyer, one of the renovated apartment’s most prized features, which Gaston feels exudes a strong downtown vibe. To further play up that feeling, a geometric-shaped leather ottoman was selected in lieu of a typical center table. “It’s cool and unexpected,” he notes.

The additional square footage also provided enough space to create an integrated family room and kitchen. “For a young family there’s nothing better than this, as it allows everyone to be together,” says Murray. Here, black floors juxtapose white walls, providing a crisp background for bright art. “There are bold pops of color,” says Gaston, “but the room is tonal overall.”

In the luxurious master suite, complete with a sitting room and his-and-her master bathrooms (hers, nickel and white; his, colored stone) the goal was serenity. Cunningham and Gaston used materials such as the silk rug and the mica on a niche accent wall, lending it sophistication. Sleek metallic walls in the sitting room up the ante.

The entire team agrees the final successful result can be credited to incorporating contemporary colors and styles, but still nodding to the traditional architecture. “When you pay to attention size and scale,” says Gaston, “you get something that feels really fresh, but lasting.”

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In the vestibule of this Manhattan apartment, architect John B. Murray created a bright atmosphere using wide-plank white oak flooring from I.J. Peiser’s Sons that was finished in a gray wash. A 1970s mirror from Glenn Dooley Antiques hangs above a Christopher Côme console from Cristina Grajales Gallery topped with a vintage ceramic lamp from BAC.

Opposite: Previously a bedroom, the new master sitting room offers the couple a private space in which to relax or work. A hand-knotted rug from ALT For Living infuses the room with movement. Vintage accents include Olivier Mourgue's Montreal chair and lighting by Goffredo Reggiani. A piece by Sheila Hicks hangs above a custom sectional upholstered in Holland & Sherry fabric.

Below: In the gallery, a painting by Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama hangs above a cast-bronze table by Ado Chale purchased at Galerie Yves Gastou in Paris. Other pieces of the homeowners' modern art collection on display include large-scale photographs by Candida Höfer (left) and Adam Fuss (right). The custom ottoman is Marked by Mark Cunningham.



Opposite: Black buffalo-hide flooring by Keleen Leathers in Westmont, Illinois, is a soft yet durable choice in the high-traffic breakfast area and family room. It's complemented by a menswear-inspired custom sectional and a vintage Karl Springer ottoman purchased at Vermillion 20th Century in Miami. The art is by David Salle.

Below: An open-concept kitchen was a key component of the renovation. A custom cantilevered banquette pulls double duty as a space saver and playful design element. DDC's UFO dining table and vintage Boris Tabacoff chairs upholstered in a Jerry Pair cobalt leather add to the spirited vibe.



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—ALEX GASTON

Right: Murray designed a chic and modern bar area that's accessible via both the gallery and library. To convey a jewel box-like effect, it was done in a custom blue lacquer with polished nickel trim and hardware. The Grigio Carnico marble counter is from ABC Stone.

Opposite: In the library, blues and grays play to the hue of the figured sycamore millwork designed by Murray and fabricated by Walter P. Sauer. A pair of Wonmin Park resin coffee tables from Carpenters Workshop Gallery is surrounded by a custom sofa upholstered in Claremont fabric and vintage chairs from Thomas Hayes Studio in Los Angeles.





Above: Striped marble makes a big impact in the windowless powder room. A cantilever vanity designed by Murray features a Normandy sink by Waterworks and a custom faucet from The Nanz Company. The sconces are from Atelier Jean Perzel in Paris.

Right: A niche lined with mica serves as a focal point in the master bedroom. The Marked by Mark Cunningham bed upholstered in Angela Brown Ltd silk features custom percale bedding by E. Braun & Co. The vintage Ward Bennett armchairs are upholstered in a Patagonia wool from Holland & Sherry and the rug is from ALT For Living.

