





FROM THE EXTERIOR, the townhouse fits right in with the other quietly opulent residences on a leafy street on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Its floor plan is no less classic, consisting of "10 chunky rooms, all in the same proportion," according to designer Ann Pyne.

Perhaps it was this very sameness that inspired the designer, head of the renowned New York firm McMillen, Inc., to give each room a strong, aesthetically distinct identity all its own. This is a house of dramatic transitions. To move from the living room, with its cloud-hue palette, to the deep-tone library is to feel as if you've stepped into The Wizard of Oz at the point in which the movie bursts into brilliant Technicolor from retro black and white.

The designer and her clients, a professional couple, are longtime friends. The wife worked closely with Pyne on the project, a process she describes as revelatory: "It was opening up a new world, like reading Emily Dickinson for the first time."

The wife, in fact, initiated the idea for the monochromatic living room. "My order for it was that it had to be white and floaty," Pyne recalls. A muted room can be difficult to pull off: Monotony is an ever-present threat. Yet Pyne keeps it handily at bay by layering on textures—"for visual interest," she says—including an array of luxurious fabrics, from the sofa's linen damask to the pale, almost chalky gray velvet upholstery on a pair of fauteuils.

Pyne retained the existing Louis XVI-style paneling and then added period-inspired plaster sconces, so that the living room

LEFT. In the library, paintings of peacocks and horses hang above a sofa upholstered in a Manuel Canoons silk webre, with thirm by Samuel 8.5 ons, a pair of lamos by the family Studies, purchased from Rapo, sits alon reproduction Chinese cabinets, and the 18th-centum needlepoint rug is English ABOVE. A gilt-wood mitror over the library's marble freplace, which, like the bookcases, is original to the apartment; Pyne brightened the existing painted walls with a coal of varinish. See Resources.





appears at first glance neoclassical, from the twist of its draperies to the garden statuary set before the French windows. And yet for all its 18th-century underpinnings, it contains modern elements as well, such as a striking cylindrical table of polished steel with a 1920s feel—a piece that is actually contemporary—one of two low tables by artist Silas Seandel in the room.

The design for this area coalesced by accident, after a gilt bronze Louis XV clock, which was to be a focal point, crashed to the ground. While it was being repaired, Pyne hung an artifact from a distinctly different era in its place: a portrait of Andy Warhol—the master of Pop himself—by the photographer Francesco Scavullo. And there, with Warholian impudence, it remains. Its placement was "a tipping point that made the room come alive." Pvne recalls.

The juxtaposition of drastically different periods "imparts a liveliness," she adds. It may also be inevitable: McMillen was founded in 1924 as a bastion of tradition; Pyne, by contrast, has "always been on the edge of things," as she puts it. She grew up with the firm, in a sense—her mother, the acclaimed decorator Betty Sherrill, was its president for three decades, beginning in 1972. While Pyne "always loved rooms and decor," she says, she pursued other professional

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOWE A stairwell features drawings by Dora Frost of British figures, including Francis Bacon and Stephen Spender; the runner is by Patterson Flynn Martin. A painted fiberglass sphere by artist Russell Crotty hangs in the foyer; the 18th-century bench is uphotistered in a linen by Zoffany, the walls are stenciled, and the floor is sheathed in steel tiles. A print by Josef Albers hangs above a Louis XVIstyle armchair in the drawing room; the scone, one of flour; was a 1970s commission by French decorator Henri Samuel, and the oak floor is stained purple-blue. FACING PAGE: The diffining room's table and chains by Eric Chapeau are based on designs by 1950 mirror is by FontanaArte; the chandelier dates from the 1830s, the wallpaper is by Gracie, and the rug is by YoSoks. See Resources.

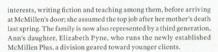












In the case of this townhouse, its rooms are discrete: Almost none affords a view of another. "The challenge was to have continuity throughout," Pyne says. She worked toward this in myriad ways—for example, by having all the floors stained a deep blue, inspired by a large painting of peacocks by John Wesley in an upstairs stairway. These exotic creatures became a subtle leitmotif through the house.

Rather than toning down the dining room's gilt-edge pillars, which seemed almost gaudy at first, she decided to "just have fun with it," she says. The sparkly silver-and-gold geometric wallpaper and patterned chairs match the flash of the architectural elements.

While the jewel-tone library on the floor above is a place of almost hallucinatory color—"a nighttime room," Pyne says—the room that sits lowest in the house, contiguous to its garden, is a place of pure daylight. The clients "wanted a garden room no one had ever seen before," the designer says. The springboard for the room was a set of closet doors designed by San Francisco decorator John Dickinson that Pyne found at auction. She lined the walls with these, even creating new ones to match as needed. The effect is of an urban town square, a magic one, where the houses have mirrored windows and, thanks to an artfully steenicled floor, the ground is cobblestone.

What stitches the design of this residence together is a philosophy more than anything else. "I think there should be a sense of slight confrontation when you go into a room," Pyne explains. Which, come to think of it, animates each and every one of these spaces. Only, it takes a while to see it.



