

Family Jewel



Three generations of interior design flair inform the New York apartment of Elizabeth Pyne, ably assisted by her mother, Ann Pyne, and grandmother Betty Sherrill, both of McMillen, Inc.

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In the library, left, with bookshelves designed by Ed Jenkins of McMillen, Inc., NYC, stands Elizabeth Pyne, right, next to her mother, Ann Pyne, and grandmother Betty Sherrill. A wrought-iron mirror by Peter Watson, through R. E. Steele Antiques, East Hampton, NY, supplies a graphic punch. Nailhead studding gives an edge to chauffeuses by M. Pierre Delbee, through Mrs. MacDougall, NYC. The dining room, this page, is girlish but sophisticated, with walls in Osborne & Little's Papilio Prints Allium. A fur throw is a plush counterpoint to René-Lucien Prou's iron chairs, in Fonthill's Dotty in black and white.





that Betty Sherrill calls “very snappy” and that turned on Elizabeth’s making important decisions and her elders’ acting on them.

The trio listened as ideas flowed, delighting in one another’s creativity. They focused on real-life things like updating the wiring and nixed the idea of overhauling the kitchen and bathroom. “I was nervous about redoing the bathroom because it would take away from its authentic feel,” says Elizabeth, who also took a day off from her job in the old masters department at Sotheby’s to go on a shopping blitz with her mother.

The entry is so diminutive that Ann Pyne cut a marble top for a rusted planter to create a table narrow enough for safe passage. “It’s the coolest thing that my mother did,” Elizabeth says. As for that crisp fabric, an Osborne & Little design with black butterflies and red pompon flowers, it unspooled onto the dining room walls. Girly yet sophisticated, it sets the tone for an arresting apartment that is, above all, a very happy place.

“Boatloads” of things failed the Elizabeth test, her mother says. A pair of curiosity elephants offered by Betty Sherrill adorn the living room mantel. Above the sofa—found on that whirlwind day of shopping—is a Paul Maze painting that has passed from grandmother to mother to daughter, a provenance not uncommon in the

A young woman in her first apartment.

A year of bare-bones occupancy while she buckles down at work. Then, a one-two punch: her mother, a well-known interior designer at McMillen, Inc., and her grandmother, a design legend, decide to take action.

What’s a girl to do? Surrender her someday vision of the sun-filled apartment? No, sirree. Elizabeth Pyne considered the crisp black-and-white fabric that her mother, Ann Pyne, had draped over a door to evoke how it would look as curtains, and said something like: “How about we use it to cover the walls?”

“I would never have thought of doing that,” says grandmother Betty Sherrill, a force of nature at McMillen, Inc., who is often described as one of the most influential designers of the past half-century.

And thus the young woman asserted her authority over a project that could have been a genteel intergenerational smackdown. “I was not a pushover,” Elizabeth says. The result is a sweet soufflé of contemporary and traditional, a look

Elizabeth, in a Carolina Herrera dress, is sitting on an iron bench by Mathieu Matégot, ca. 1950s. A Twig floor lamp in bronze is from Vaughan, and a mid-century black-and-white lacquer jewelry box is from Lost City Arts, NYC. The photogravure is by Alfred Stieglitz. ■ In the foyer, opposite page, visible in the background, Cowtan & Tout’s geometric wallpaper, Pavilion in Charcoal, adds texture and dimension to the small space. The lithograph is by Joan Miró.





The living room, this page, blends pieces in the style of 18th-century France with cheerful modern patterns. Anthony Lawrence-Belfair's Chanel sofa is in Liberty Rhythm Weaves' Joplin, and fringed poufs are topped with Nina Campbell's Broadway Rio Rita, both through Osborne & Little. Louis XV armchairs have old-world flair, while simple curtains, a McMillen trademark, here in Nina Campbell's Broadway Showboat, are young and fresh. ■ The family dog, Louis XIV, poses, opposite page, beneath a headboard by Ernest Studio, Inc., NYC, that is covered in Travers's Lacquered Linen in Warm White. Rose Cumming's Coral Stripe is on the walls. A Swedish table, painted by McMillen, adds modern lines. See Shopping, last pages.

apartment. Alfred Stieglitz and Marius de Zayas photogravures, gifts from mother to daughter, add to the living room mix. "When I graduated from Trinity, I was interested in the American modern movement," Elizabeth says, "and my mother wanted me to have something that actually symbolized my academic interests."

The dining room features a Mathieu Matégot bench and table topped with glass, surrounded by four René-Lucien Prou chairs with spotted print fabric. It works for takeout or for dinner parties. Always she uses the white plates with the leopard print border borrowed from her grandmother and not yet returned.

Elizabeth selected a princess high bed, for the storage space underneath, and decided against formal bed coverings or curtains. Tiles by the American Aesthetic artist William De Morgan, one honoring Betty Sherrill, hang above the bed. Wallpaper patterned with coral branches appeared. Ann Pyne worried about it being too busy. As with other elements of the apartment that sparked debate, she listened to her daughter. "I loved working with my mother," Elizabeth says. "She's so passionate about making something you'll like." The art of listening might be nature or nurture. Betty Sherrill recalls that Eleanor McMillen-Brown, the founder of McMillen, "taught me never to talk a client into anything—never." Whichever sort the influence, Elizabeth reaps the benefits. Every morning she wakes up, sees the wallpaper, and thinks, "Gosh, this is so pretty. I can't wait to start the day." Elizabeth Blish Hughes is a writer based in San Francisco and New York City.

