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Portrait of a gentleman

This distinctive apartment interior is resplendent with eclectic objects that express the owner's creativity and individuality



An interior designer will always be guided by their client's wishes. Their creativity and vision are continuously being adapted to suit somebody else's lifestyle. But what happens when they design their own home – when there is nobody to please but themselves?

Interior designer Robert Couturier's Manhattan apartment is a riot of color that offers

a vibrant sanctuary amidst the grayness of inner city living.

"I like the wild juxtaposition of rich tones and textures. In New York, color is joyful. It makes urban living more fun," he says.

Each of the apartment's three rooms has been put together using Couturier's innate sense of balance and dramatic feel for color. Sculptures, paintings and furniture col-



Facing page: Art and furniture collected over many years is the inspiration for this vibrant and colorful apartment interior.

Above: In the foreground is a round wooden table by Robsjohn Gibbons. In front of the curtains are plaster sculptures, including a depiction of the goddess Venus, that were once owned by Andy Warhol.

Left: The tapestry on the wall is by Joan Miro.



Above: The blue and white checkerboard feature wall was inspired by the interior of a royal Japanese palace. The cream-colored day bed is by Jacques Adnet.

Right: Illuminating the 17th-century painting 'A Portrait of a Man in a Red Cape' by Francois-Xavier Fabre, Montpellier (1766-1837), are nickeled metal wall sconces from the 1930s. Beneath the painting is a Jacques Adnet and Maurice Savin dining table, circa 1948.



lected over many years define each room.

"Objects take priority. I design the space around them, rather than the other way around," he says.

As Couturier also has a country home, he sometimes transfers furniture and artworks between his residences. This ensures both interiors appear fresh and interesting.

"The addition of just one

painting or piece of furniture can often alter the entire ambience of the room," he says.

This is why in the living room, core furnishings such as the curtains, have been selected more by instinct than to adhere to a deliberate design. For example, the white curtains with the red fabric border replaced dark-colored curtains after Couturier acquired the plaster





sculptures. These figures were originally made for the Duke of Northumberland and were later acquired by Andy Warhol. Couturier bought them from one of Warhol's assistants.

The intriguing history of many of Couturier's artworks adds to their appeal. Take, for example, the portrait of the English gentleman that is set against a silk backdrop, which is itself strung

across a checkerboard wall. It is an original work by French painter François-Xavier Fabre, a pupil of artist Jacques-Louis David in Paris in the 1790s.

On the opposite wall, a Joan Miro tapestry is framed by two octagonal mirrors. Yet perhaps the most distinctive feature of this room is the zebra skin ottoman, whose bold pattern seems to unify the eccentric range of objects in the room.



Above: Although the apartment's middle room serves as a thoroughfare that connects the living room and the bedroom, it has a distinct personality. The Indian embroidered curtain creates a fourth wall that encloses the space.

Left: The round rug introduces a circular motif into the square-shaped room. This is further enhanced by the dining room table and the console mirror by Josef Hoffman.



Above: The two curved screens are made from sheet-rock with a steel trim. Behind one is a small bathroom, and the other conceals gym equipment. The leather-and-metal lamp is by Jacques Abnet.

Right: A Spanish rug defines this sitting area, where what appears to be a pink sofa is actually an original Louis XV day bed, that is used by the owner as his bed.



The apartment's middle room, into which the elevator opens, serves as a thoroughfare that connects the living room and the bedroom. The room's square shape has been entirely altered by the placement of a large round rug.

"This rug is central to the room's design. Everything else has been placed around it," Couturier says.

In this windowless space,



the floor-to-ceiling curtains, which were embroidered in India, create a fourth wall that encloses the room and makes it appear larger than it is.

In one corner there is a selection of 1950s French pieces that include a bamboo and metal floor lamp and a pair of Jansen consoles. Matching the clean-lined aesthetic of these objects are glass-shelved bookcases.

The third room is the most



intimate area in the apartment. It functions as the bedroom and contains two permanent curve screens made from sheet-rock. These conceal a small bathroom behind one and gym equipment behind another.

Placed between these screens is a 1920s French desk, which serves as Couturier's home office. Positioned in front of each screen, are matching Louis XVI chairs. This

echo of aristocratic France is further enhanced by the Louis XV day bed opposite, which is Couturier's bed. The antique day bed occasionally becomes a sofa when Couturier fancies a change of scene from the living room.

The furnishings that surround the day bed include a Spanish rug, Indian throne and a pair of Chinese bookcases.

As each piece in this apart-

ment is placed with thought and care, Couturier has ensured that the bones of the apartment—the walls and ceilings—create a visually appealing backdrop.

Feature walls, such as the checkerboard pattern in the living room and swirling motifs in the other rooms, are painted by Paulin Paris. The floor is made from antique beams that were reclaimed and milled especially for this space.

Above: This well-balanced composition of furnishings and artworks has an international flavor. In front of the Louis XV day bed is an Indian throne, while on either side are a pair of Chinese bookcases. The plaster lamps on top of the bookcases are by Paulin Paris, the same artist who painted the walls. In the foreground is a leather and metal desk by Jacques Adnet, circa 1920s.

Photography by Kellan MacLeod and William Varso