



## DECOR

# Jay McInerney and Anne Hearst's Manhattan Home

The writer and his wife enlist Robert Couturier to decorate their new home—a refined Manhattan penthouse with panoramic views

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When romance finally blossomed for Jay McInerney and Anne Hearst, two decades after their first meeting, they went in search of a home that would fit their happy midlife union, someplace fresh, sunny, and bohemian. They ended up purchasing a Greenwich Village penthouse . . . of sorts. “It was a very eccentric space,” McInerney recalls of the 1,800-square-foot aerie, which was originally a cluster of maids’ rooms constructed in the late 1920s. “But we both fell in love with it instantly.”

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For McInerney, a novelist—and *Wall Street Journal* wine columnist—whose first book, *Bright Lights, Big City*, chronicled the hedonism of '80s Manhattan through the eyes of an aspiring writer, the apartment represented the fulfillment of a long-held dream.

“It had been my fantasy for 25 years to live in a penthouse, preferably in the Village,” he says. “I remember as a kid seeing movies from the '20s and '30s, when the penthouse was this new concept that encapsulated the glamour of living in New York.”

Hearst, an heiress to her grandfather William Randolph Hearst's publishing fortune, had spent most of her adult life on the city's Upper East Side and relished the prospect of moving downtown with her new husband. (They were married with great fanfare at the restaurant “21” in November 2006.)

The siren charms of the apartment included high ceilings, abundant natural light, terraces on three sides, and glorious views of the Chrysler and Empire State buildings. But major renovations were required. The scantily insulated penthouse was bone-chilling in winter and stifling in summer; two of its five main rooms were actually leaky, drafty glassed-in terraces that needed proper walls.

“We had no idea what we were getting into,” McInerney says. “It was like a houseboat on the verge of sinking. The wind whistled through it.”

Hearst had previously commissioned New York architect and designer [Robert Couturier](#) to build her a country house on Long Island, with elaborate fireplaces and moldings reminiscent of Wynton and Hearst Castle, her grandfather's baronial California estates. Though the penthouse called for a less formal approach, the couple enlisted the versatile Couturier to transform it as well. “Robert's very good at mixing traditional and contemporary,” Hearst says. It's a talent that helped him coordinate the pair's differing design sensibilities. “Anne leans toward antiques and classical details,” Couturier says. “She has absorbed the style of her grandfather. Jay has more contemporary taste that's stricter and more streamlined.”

They decided not to alter the peculiar layout but agreed to remake the two glass-walled terraces as energy-efficient rooms with double-glazed windows and insulated copper roofs. Couturier turned one of them into a sleek blue study for McInerney, bedecking it with photographs of the author's literary heroes, including F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, James Joyce, and Jack Kerouac. In this compact, refined spot—with wide-plank floorboards salvaged from a Long Island barn—McInerney writes on an ebonized Jansen desk graced by two bronze nudes.

The other new space, a cozy south-facing sitting room that doubles as guest quarters, combines brown velvet club chairs from the '50s with striped window shades designed by Couturier and a vintage industrial floor lamp from McInerney's personal collection.

In the living room Couturier integrated contemporary furniture the clients already owned, such as a shagreen cocktail table, with a range of Art Deco and midcentury pieces, like a '30s Swedish ceiling light and an Arne Jacobsen Egg chair. The couple's artwork adds a further richness to the space: Close to the vivid James Rosenquist bird painting displayed above the fireplace hangs a youthful portrait of Hearst, in full makeup and with teased hair, immortalized by fashion photographer Francesco Scavullo during the period she and McInerney first met as bright young things in Manhattan.

“Most of the art in this room is from the '80s, because that's when we came to New York,” McInerney explains. One highlight is an iconic work from the era: a charcoal, graphite, and ink drawing from Robert Longo's “Men in the Cities” series, featuring three sharply dressed figures who might be writhing in discomfort or disco dancing ecstatically. “We both really related to it,” Hearst says.

The master bedroom, with its marble Louis XVI fireplace and orange 1930s easy chairs, resembles a stage set for a comedy of manners by Noël Coward in which an uptown heiress and her swashbuckling swain find true love and sip

cocktails. The '30s parchment-covered bed offers a splendid view of a freestanding antique copper bathtub that Couturier found in Connecticut. Behind it a new floor-to-ceiling bay window overlooks a terrace, with linen curtains to preserve the bather's modesty.

After three decades spent designing homes, Couturier was struck by the unusual harmoniousness of the project. "Many clients are barbarians in the way they treat each other," he says, only half joking. "But Anne and Jay are so civilized and respectful of each other. They're also very polite, which makes working with them incredibly pleasant."

The only point of contention was how to replace the apartment's leaky windows. McInerney and Couturier wanted to replicate the original small-paned mullions, but Hearst was determined to install picture windows, citing as a precedent the ones her grandfather's architect, Julia Morgan, devised in the '20s for the guesthouses at Hearst Castle. "I felt that the small windows broke up the view," she says. McInerney and Couturier conceded, reluctantly at first. "Anne prevailed," says McInerney, "and she was right."

Couturier introduced large steel-framed windows and French doors that provide lovely vistas of the lushly planted terraces, landscaped by Stuart Schechter of [Interior Foliage Design](#), with stylish eucalyptus furniture from Espasso. The couple enjoys breakfast outdoors, beneath a pergola entwined with wisteria. "It's like having a house in the country, except you have these amazing city views," McInerney says. For this urban sojourner, the fantasy of a sophisticated rooftop perch has become reality. Sometimes the dreams of a young literary aspirant do come true.

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