GIRL BOSS: SUZANNE DROESE

A LIFE IN AMBER: McDERMOTT & MCCOUGH

A CLASSIC NYC PIED-A-TERRE

DE GOURNAY IS OFF THE WALL

FALL FASHION

A BIT BLOOMS

BURY

SPECIAL SECTION

NORTH TEXAS GROWS UP, UP, UP

A few years ago, designer David Kleinberg threw a house party at his new Upper East Side apartment in New York City. Real estate being a rare commodity in Manhattan, his purchase of a two-bedroom 1925-era residence in one of the city’s most coveted neighborhoods was reason to celebrate. He remembers the moment when longtime client and friend Nicola Marcus walked in and looked around. The first words out of her mouth weren’t hello, but a joking expletive. “This is exactly what I’ve been looking for and haven’t been able to find,” Nicola said, surveying the apartment’s well-bred elaborate millwork, marble fireplaces, and high ceilings.

Nicola and her husband, Jeffrey Marcus — the cable TV magnate who made news in 1998 when he sold his Dallas-headquartered Marcus Cable for $3.3 billion — already owned palatial homes in Palm Beach and Aspen, both of which Kleinberg had decorated. Jeff, now a partner in a New York-based private equity firm, needed a pied-à-terre for business jaunts to the city. For years, the couple made do with rentals and hotels, and after an exhaustive search of more than 50 apartments, they had all but given up on finding anything with personality. Most small apartments in the area, Nicola says, were bland and cookie-cutter. Seeing Kleinberg’s charming apartment sparked new interest. “Who sold you this apartment?” she asked. As fate would have it, Kleinberg’s real estate agent was at the party that night, and her host walked her across the room to meet him. “I told [the agent] to let me know if he ever found anything similar to David’s,” Nicola says. “Sure enough, two or three months later, he called.”

The timing was perfect, as the couple was already en route to New York. When they landed, Jeff headed to work while Nicola met the agent at the Park Avenue apartment. She took one look at its tall, carved-plaster ceilings, original oak paneling, and wood-burning fireplace, and exclaimed, “This is it!” Then she rang Jeff on his cellphone. “I’m in a meeting,” he whispered. But Nicola insisted, “Just tell them you’ll be back in 10 minutes.” Jeff made an excuse and dashed over. “Happy wife, happy life,” he says with a laugh. The apartment, which had been owned by the same woman for 50 years, was in estate condition — which is code for needing lots of work. “We could see the potential,” Jeff says. It was a small apartment, yes, but it had the kind of architectural details usually found in much grander spaces. It was perfect.

Designed in 1917 by architects James Edwin Ruthven Carpenter — also known as J.E.R. Carpenter — the 12-story building is an elegant example of the structures that define Park and Upper Fifth avenues. Carpenter and revered architect Rosario Candela were the leading architects of Manhattan’s earliest luxury residential high-rises. Over the past century, their buildings have been home to American aristocracy — early industry and banking magnates, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, and current-day social elite and hedge-fund moguls. The most opulent residences originally encompassed entire floors, with multiple bedrooms, butlers’ and servants’ quarters, galleries, reception rooms, and wine closets. The Marcus’ fifth-floor apartment on Park Avenue is one of three units converted in 1952 from a former 17-room full-floor residence. In fact, their oak-paneled living room was once a grand library. Nicola and Jeff were clear that they wanted a very compact, true pied-à-terre, but with lots of architectural interest, says Kleinberg, who, along with design partner Lance Scott, has
Custom steel door design is by Ten Plus Three.

Bega sconces.

In the dining room, walls are upholstered in Ralph Lauren’s
worked with the Marcuses for a decade on multiple homes in Palm Beach and Aspen. “It was pretty much love at first sight,” says Nicola of their working relationship. “We all have similar tastes.” No one could have been better suited for the job than Kleinberg, who spent 16 years at legendary design firm Parish-Hadley Associates, where he was mentored by Albert Hadley and Sister Parish, before launching his own firm in 1997. Since then, he’s been a regular on Architectural Digest’s AD100 list and was inducted into Interior Design magazine’s Hall of Fame, among other honors. The firm also has Texas ties. Scott, a Houston native, studied at Southern Methodist University and earned his degree in architecture from the University of Texas at Austin. The Marcuses have worked with the Kleinberg design team on renovating homes almost nonstop for the past eight years, and each project is a head-turner, including their previous Palm Beach home, which won the city’s prestigious preservation award. Their most recent beachfront residence was so unattractive when they first purchased it that Nicola cried for two days. Kleinberg and Scott worked their magic, and it’s now a showplace that landed on the May 2017 cover of Veranda. And the Marcuses recently finished redecorating their house in Aspen, where Nicola lived for many years after moving from her native Germany. “The four of us are not only on the same wavelength, but we’ve all become such good friends,” she says. The Marcuses’ larger homes are designed for entertaining and family gatherings. For the New York apartment, however, the idea was to create an intimate and comfortable space, a respite from the hustle below. The apartment was reconfigured from two bedrooms to one, and storage solutions became paramount. Special closets were designed to store suitcases and to hide a washer and dryer, while an extra bedroom became a dressing room. A New York-size kitchen — “hardly even a utility room in Texas terms,” says Kleinberg — is behind custom pocket doors. A cozy dining niche was created from the original pantry space. “The apartment functions far above its weight in terms of livability,” says Jeff. “Everything we need is here.” Occasionally, Kleinberg and Scott pushed the Marcuses beyond their comfort level. The old oak paneling in the living room was in such bad shape that Nicola initially wanted to paint over it. Kleinberg insisted on restoring it, then refinishing it with silver leaf. “We knew it would be a costly and time-consuming project. And we were concerned the silver leaf would be too glittery,” Jeff says. “But David was adamant, and in hindsight, he was right.” Kleinberg enlisted French conservator Christophe Pouyres to bring the 100-year-old paneling back to life. A favorite of Martha Stewart and Bunny Williams, Pouyres has worked on virtually every Carpenter and Candela building in the area and restored Gracie Mansion and City Hall in New York. He spent weeks bleaching, staining, cerning, and finally silver-leading each panel. At the same time, artisans on scaffolding carefully chipped away decades of paint from the carved-plaster ceiling. “It was a big deal, but it was also
of the master bedroom. Shimmering Patagonia blue wool cocooning the walls master bath and Holland & Sherry wool sateen. There’s Pietra Cardosa natural stone. There’s paint, and countertops and backsplash are lacquered in Benjamin moore white in burnished nickel and glass, cabinets designed semi-transparent pocket doors are toped with custom silk chenille rugs. Herringbone oak floors throughout are Pollack strié pewter velvet. The restored dining room, the walls are upholstered in the apartment in elegant materials. In the masters of creating understated life that had been so beautiful in 1917,” Nicola says.

Masters of creating understated glamour, Kleinberg and Scott enveloped the apartment in elegant materials. In the dining room, the walls are upholstered in Pollack strié pewter velvet. The restored herringbone oak floors throughout are topped with custom silk chenille rugs from Patterson Flynn Martin, which also carries David Kleinberg’s own rug collection. In the kitchen, the firm designed semi-transparent pocket doors in burnished nickel and glass, cabinets are lacquered in Benjamin Moore white paint, and countertops and backsplash are Pietra Cardosa natural stone. There’s Bianco Dolomiti slab marble in the master bath and Holland & Sherry wool sateen. ne of typography and letterforms by American artist Alma has known Jeff for more than 30 years. While some works came from their previous homes, others were purchased for specific areas of their apartment. “They both have a very good eye and know exactly what they want,” says Schwartz, who flew to New York to help install art in the apartment after the renovation. Artist Teresa Fernández’s optical-illusion wall sculptures are mounted in the dining room and hallway, reflecting light and seeming to flow across space. A dramatically dark Richard Serra painting hangs near the front door while a large black painting of typography and letterforms by American artist doates dominates the living room. A calming blue-and-green work by Jasper Johns hangs in the master bedroom. “Each piece of art in the apartment communicates beautifully with the other,” Schwartz says. “That’s why it all just sings.”

For Jeff and Nicola, their New York apartment does just what Kleinberg and Scott designed it to do: cocoon them from the outside world. “After a busy day in the city, which is full of intensity and vibrancy, it’s great to come back to that apartment and exhale and take a breath,” Jeff says. “We make it a practice on our first night to have a quiet dinner at home.” Nicola is an excellent cook, and she can’t wait to get into the kitchen. “It’s very functional,” she says. “People who like to cook will tell you, cooking in a small kitchen is easier, as long as you have a good gas stove. You stand in one spot and do it all.” Jeff will open a good bottle of wine, settle into the velvet banquette while Nicola cooks. It’s the perfect retreat for a party of two.

Nicola’s refined personal style inspired the selection of furnishings, says Scott. “She’s classically dressed, but there’s always an edge into whether it’s a coat or a blazer or piece of jewelry. A lot of times we’ll see something and say, “That’s so Nicola. I’ll look great in the room.” Almost everything was custom-designed or purchased for the apartment, aside from the Art Deco dining-room chairs, which were recovered in Holland & Sherry wool sateen, and a rare Jacques Adnet sideboard in the dining room. They scored several exquisite French 19th-century pieces from Karl Kemp Antiques in New York City — a hallway bench, which was recovered in Holland & Sherry wool sateen, and a rare Jacques Adnet sideboard in the dining room. A 1970s-era Austrian chandelier with crystal spikes by Bakalowits & Söhne dazzles against the silver-leaf paneling and plaster ceiling in the living room.

The Marcuses have collected contemporary art since they were married, often working with Dallas-based art advisor Cindy Schwartz of CCS Fine Art, who has known Jeff for more than 30 years. While some works came from their previous homes, others were purchased for specific areas of their apartment. “They both have a very good eye and know exactly what they want,” says Schwartz, who flew to New York to help install art in the apartment after the renovation.Artist Teresa Fernández’s optical-illusion wall sculptures are mounted in the dining room and hallway, reflecting light and seeming to flow across space. A dramatically dark Richard Serra painting hangs near the front door while a large black painting of typography and letterforms by American artist doates dominates the living room. A calming blue-and-green work by Jasper Johns hangs in the master bedroom. “Each piece of art in the apartment communicates beautifully with the other,” Schwartz says. “That’s why it all just sings.”

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