

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AUTHORITY

DECEMBER 2016

THE WHITE HOUSE

INSIDE THE STYLISH PRIVATE
WORLD OF THE OBAMA FAMILY

THE ART ISSUE
LIVING WITH MASTERPIECES
FROM EVERY ERA

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Perfect Harmony

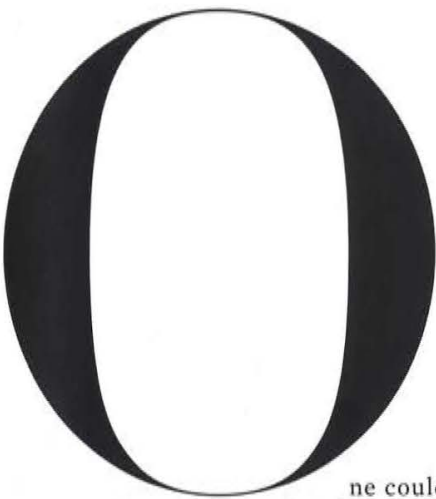
In Clarissa and Edgar Bronfman's New York apartment, designer Amy Lau made sure that everything lives up to the blue-chip art collection

TEXT BY DAN SHAW
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON SCHMIDT
STYLED BY MICHAEL REYNOLDS

A wire sculpture by Venezuelan artist Gego hangs in the foyer, joining a piece by León Ferrari (at left), a chair by Joseph Walsh Studio, and a Christopher Chiappa gold-leaf stool. For details see Sources.

An array of choice 20th-century artworks hangs in Clarissa Bronfman's office, where a pair of blue acrylic-paint chairs by Eduardo Costa flank a Carlo Mollino cocktail table. Bespoke wool rug by Patricia van Dalen.





ne could write a book about the meticulous four-year renovation and decoration of art collectors Clarissa and Edgar Bronfman Jr.'s triplex penthouse on Park Avenue. And, in fact, their interior designer, Amy Lau, produced a coffee-table tome as a gift for the couple, chronicling their collaboration with many of the artisans responsible for the apartment's custom-made rugs, lighting, and furniture.

Curled up barefoot on the 1960s Brazilian sofa in the leather-swathed library, Clarissa has a laid-back demeanor that belies her formidable role in New York cultural life as a vice-chairman of Carnegie Hall, a trustee of the Museum of Modern Art, and cochairman of the Guggenheim Museum's Latin American Committee. (She also practices photography and creates a sought-after line of jewelry.) The six-bedroom apartment, she explains, was conceived as an easygoing environment for raising four children (now ages 15 to 20) and as a flexible backdrop for the global art collection she's assembled with her husband, a scion of the family behind Seagram distillers and the former CEO and chairman of the Warner Music Group, who is now a venture capitalist with a special interest in profitably reducing carbon emissions.

The Bronfmans worked with two architects—Clarissa's brother Frank Alcock, who lives in Caracas, Venezuela, where the siblings were born, and New York-based Peter Guzy of Asfour Guzy—directing them to transform the traditional prewar layout of dignified but dark rooms into light, airy spaces that would allow furniture and art to be rearranged without disrupting the apartment's elegant flow. And the synergy between art and architecture is indeed visceral. In the spare entrance gallery, a dramatic sweeping white-painted steel staircase wraps around a suspended wire sculpture by the German-born Venezuelan artist Gego. From the foot of the stairs, there's a view into the double-height section of the living room—what Guzy describes as an “internal piazza that binds the apartment together.” “I wanted you to feel intuitively and immediately welcome,” says Clarissa, explaining why the



foyer also has direct views into the library, dining room, and her office, which all have pocket doors to allow flexible levels of openness and retreat.

After construction commenced, Lau joined the project. “The architecture has the right balance—it’s on par with and equal to the art but doesn’t overpower it,” she notes. It was Lau’s mission to help Clarissa sort through the art and furniture she had in storage, which included a pair of Jean-Michel Frank sofas now reupholstered in a handwoven cotton blend by Tara Chapas of Brooklyn. Lau commissioned furnishings (such as Californian Lauren Saunders’s embroidered throw pillows resembling abstract canvases) that would hold their own among the Bronfmans’ collection of pre-Columbian artifacts, kinetic sculpture, video art, drawings, and 20th-century paintings. A sprawling color-blocked rug by Jorge Lizarazo of Hechizoo in Bogotá, Colombia, is woven from natural and man-made fibers laced with metallic wires; its

Clarissa stands beside the living room’s custom-made Vladimir Kagan sofa. A pre-Columbian deity sculpture sits next to Diego Rivera’s *Dance in Tehuantepec*.



In the living room, Jean-Michel Frank sofas and a Paul Dupre-Lafon cocktail table are arranged on a Jorge Lizarazo rug crafted to complement the Roberto Matta painting. Cast-bronze side table by the Campana Brothers; 1950s Italian armchairs.

colors subtly complement Chilean artist Roberto Matta's 1944 Surrealist painting *Science, Conscience et Patience du Vitreur*, which occupies the entire wall above the living room's fireplace.

On the opposite end of the living room, Diego Rivera's 1928 *Dance in Tehuantepec* hangs on elm paneling above a seating group that includes a pair of two-tone leather chairs Gio Ponti designed in the 1950s for a house in Caracas and the floating curved Clarissa sofa commissioned in 2013 from Vladimir Kagan. (Lau devoted 16 pages in her book to the sofa's evolution.)

The Bronfmans' commitment to innovation and perfection is evident in the dining room. A model of Roman designer Achille Salvagni's massive Octopus chandelier, with eight patinated bronze arms and onyx-filtered lights, was brought in to make sure its proportions would dovetail with the amber resin tabletop on a free-form wood base by Irish designer Joseph Walsh. "It takes eight people to move the table, so we needed to get everything exactly right," Clarissa explains.

Throughout the apartment, rugs were designed as works of art. In the library—where a flat-screen television plays a loop of videos by art stars like Bill Viola and Christian Marclay—Clarissa took a Portuguese tile as the inspiration for a multihued cowhide rug by Kyle Bunting. In her office a wool color-field collage rug by Miami-based artist Patricia van Dalen makes an ideal base for royal-blue acrylic-paint chairs by Eduardo Costa. "He's a conceptual artist from Argentina, and these chairs are made only of layers and layers of paint—no structure, no wood, no concrete," Clarissa says.

The Bronfman children collaborated with Lau on their second-floor bedrooms. "Every kid would sit with Amy and say, 'This is what I want' and 'This is what my mother wants, which I hate,' and they would do their own thing," recalls Clarissa with a laugh. Her younger son's room is especially vibrant, with walls the color of tomato soup, a rug inspired by a Sol LeWitt artwork, and a headboard that riffs on George Nelson's Marshmallow sofa. A Vik Muniz portrait of her son when he was six or seven hangs over the nightstand. "All of my children have a portrait by him," Clarissa says.

There's still one more project in the works. On the terrace just off the minimally furnished third-floor master suite, the Bronfmans have commissioned architect Maya Lin and landscape designer Edwina von Gal to create an art installation they can have all to themselves. □



Italian architect Achille Salvagni's Octopus chandelier stretches above the sculptural dining table by Joseph Walsh Studio, which also produced the pair of Enigma II chairs. Vintage Superleggera chairs by Gio Ponti for Cassina.

"The architecture has the right balance—it's on par with and equal to the art but doesn't overpower it," notes designer Amy Lau.

Design Notes

Bold bespoke furnishings and accessories hold their own in the Bronfmans' art-filled home

Collar by Clarissa Bronfman; \$7,000. clarissabronfman.com



Embroidered silk-velvet pillow by Lauren Saunders; price upon request. 805-302-5479



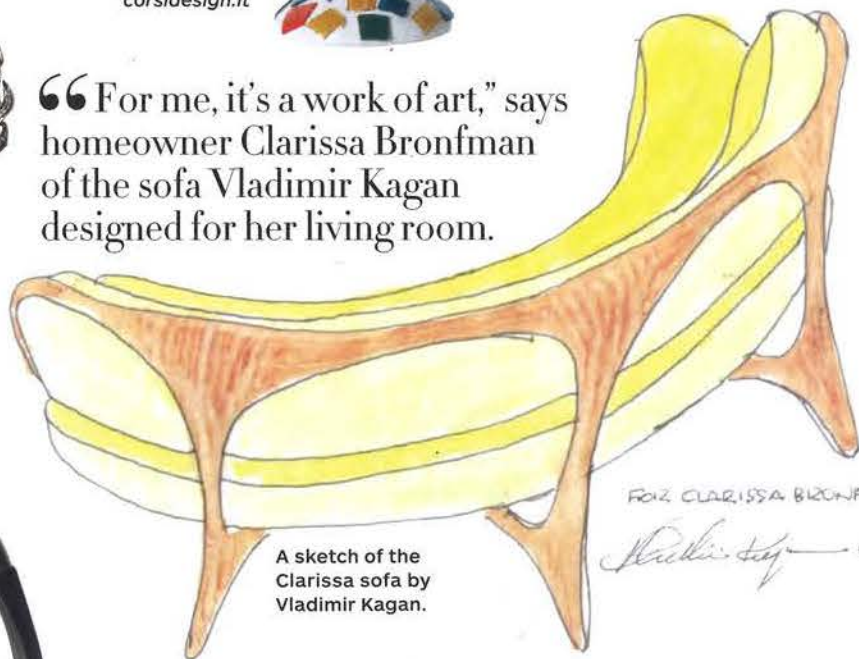
Soft resin Rock vase by Gaetano Pesce; \$600. corsidesign.it



The library walls are covered in tile by Garrett Leather; to the trade. garrettleather.com



“For me, it's a work of art,” says homeowner Clarissa Bronfman of the sofa Vladimir Kagan designed for her living room.



A sketch of the Clarissa sofa by Vladimir Kagan.

FOR CLARISSA BRONFMAN
Sketch by — OCT. 2013

Custom-made hand-tufted wool rug by Patricia van Dalen; \$14,000. patriciavandalen.com



Enigma II chair by Joseph Walsh Studio; \$19,300. josephwalsh-studio.com



Sand-cast bronze bowls by Jaimal Odedra; from \$980. maison-songerard.com



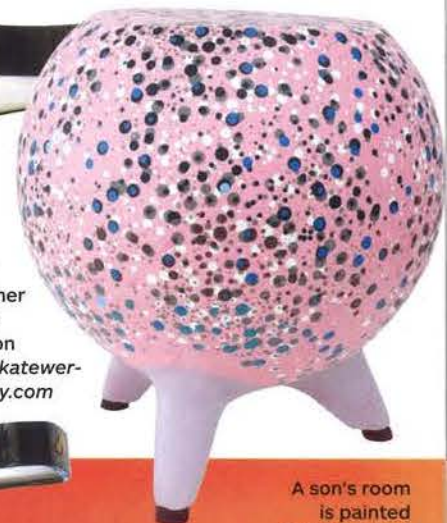
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF CLARISSA BRONFMAN; COURTESY OF LAUREN SAUNDERS; TALO PERNA; JASON SCHMIDT; COURTESY OF MAX LAMB; ROBERT LEVIN; ELISABETH BERSTEIN; JASON SCHMIDT; FERNANDO LASZLO; COURTESY OF HERMAN MILLER; COURTESY OF ALEXANDRA VON FURSTENBERG; STUART TYSON; ANDREW BRADLEY; COURTESY OF PATRICIA VAN DALEN; COURTESY OF VLADIMIR KAGAN



Octopus chandelier by Achille Salvagni; \$110,000. maison-songerard.com



Stool by Christopher Chiappa; price upon request. katewreblegallery.com



Foam-and-rubber Poly chair by Max Lamb; \$5,800. johnsontrading-gallery.com



Ofidia side table by the Campana Brothers; \$15,000. friedmanbenda.com



Bloomin' acrylic vases by Alexandra von Furstenberg; \$220 and \$290. avfhome.com



A son's room is painted Bull's Eye Red by Benjamin Moore. benjaminmoore.com



Marshmallow sofa by Irving Harper and George Nelson; \$5,579. hermanmiller.com



“In decorating, I like a bit of irreverence,” says Clarissa. “I don't believe in strict rules about what should go where.”