

MY SPACE

This New York Apartment Packs Major Personality into 400 Square Feet

Wait 'til you see the leopard-print couch

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By the time she had moved into her current apartment, Elle McGrath was ready for something new. “I kept my previous apartment super minimal and simple,” she says. “I wanted a change of pace.” Luckily, Elle, [a collage and decoupage artist](#), already had just the right collaborator in mind for the Greenwich Village abode: her brother, interior designer [Patrick McGrath](#). “I trust Patrick implicitly with everything that has to do with design,” she continues. “He has an intuitive knack for making the most out of space.” With 400 square feet to work with, that expertise would come in handy.

For decor, a black floral Bill Blass rug from the 1970s served as a bold starting point, contributing a generous dose of the pattern and texture Elle envisioned as cornerstones of her new space. Adding to the fun: a leopard-print sofa purchased from friend and gallery owner [Michael Bargo](#), a collection of jewel-toned velvet pillows, and a playful plaster column from French sculptor Marc Bankowsky.



Holding court in a colorful corner: a sleek plaster column by sculptor Marc Bankowsky, from [Galerie Michael Bargo](#).



Vintage fabric, purchased years ago on a trip to Paris, hangs above the bed.

When it came to layout, furniture was arranged to create distinct zones—“sort of like having rooms within the open design,” Elle explains. (Black silk moiré curtains, repurposed from one of Patrick’s [previous apartments](#) and suspended near the entryway, helped add to the effect.) Despite the occasional small-space challenge—a diminutive closet, for instance—the apartment’s limited square footage doesn’t get in the way of a good time. Friends and family are always welcome, Elle says, and can expect to arrive to music and candles.



Elle lounges on the leopard-print sofa in her 400-square-foot apartment.

Evidence of past festivities are everywhere, thanks to a vintage Polaroid the artist received recently as a gift. Snapshots of friends and family are scattered throughout the space, fixed to the back of the front door with magnets and stacked in a neat pile on her pink KAMARQ side table. “It’s been so special documenting these memories,” she says.

Learn more about the artist and her home below.



A drapery-detailed nightstand holds a Michael Bargo lamp and a framed 1960s Polaroid taken by the artist's grandfather.



A lineup of display-worthy cosmetics sits below a leather and canvas piece by artist Paul Morehouse. “It reminds me of the Chanel camellias,” Elle says.



“Elle knows what she likes and doesn’t like when it comes to interiors so there wasn’t any hand-wringing,” Patrick says. “And if she was ever unsure of something, she would just say, ‘whatever you think,’ which, as a designer, is always good to hear.”

Elle elaborates

The artist shares a few New York City staples and the surprising item she recently had delivered.

Biggest conversation starter in your apartment: The column and bedside table.

Favorite place to look for home decor: Xenomania in the East Village for textiles. Maison Gerard for furniture (a girl can dream!).

Best place for design inspo in NYC: Galerie Michael Bargo.

Favorite thing about your neighborhood: It's so central! A lot of friends are nearby and I can walk to my office. I work for fashion designer Laura Gelfand, who is a few blocks away.

Last thing you had delivered: Essentia water and a jade roller.

Favorite Sunday activity at home: Working on my collages!



"I lived in the space for a while before I found the right image for above the sofa," Elle says. Her final pick: a black-and-white photograph by French fashion designer Hedi Slimane.



A pink KAMARQ stool subs in for a side table.



"It's an intuitive process more than anything else," says Elle of her collage work, an interest she's pursued since high school. "I feel that every little piece has its own place and I just need to find out where that is."