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THE HISTORIC APARTMENT WORTHY OF A TRUMAN CAPOTE SWAN IS STILL THE GRAND DAME OF NEW YORK ABODES— ONLY SHINIER

“It’s the kind of place where dreams feel possible.”

BY [RACHEL SILVA](#) PUBLISHED: SEP 26, 2024

There are certain Manhattan buildings whose austere facades belie their glittering inhabitants. The Verona is such a place, a stately, 10-story structure on Madison Avenue built in 1906 by architect William E. Mowbray in the Italian Renaissance Revival style. The building’s former occupants, however, are its most formidable accreditation, boasting residents like Truman Capote swan and socialite Slim Keith, TV newsman Mike Wallace, actress Kitty Carlisle Hart, and more recently, Jeffrey Zucker, the former president of CNN.

So when a rare apartment in the building—the longtime home of midcentury fashion designer Herbert Kasper—hit the market in March 2021, the would-be buyers lined up.



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The breakfast nook, just off the kitchen, features a custom banquette by Ritz Upholstery in Houles Vinyl. The chairs are by Laura Gonzalez in Le Manach, the table is by Pluhowski Furniture, and the photograph of Jackie Kennedy in a ski mask is by Harry Benson.

Into the apartment stepped an interested woman and her mother-in-law. She was swooning as soon as she crossed into the foyer of the 4,700-square-foot residence, which had been renovated by Axel Vervoordt. “There’s so much light; almost every side of the apartment has windows,” she explains. “Depending on how you look at it, you can feel both the vibrancy of New York and a touch of Paris—it’s the kind of place where dreams feel possible.” After conferring with her husband, it was clear that this would be the perfect home for her soon-to-be family of five. They secured the apartment, and thus began the work of making it their own.

Lucky for the client, finding an interior designer needn't require branching out beyond her family tree. She called on her older sister, New York City-based designer **Jessie Schuster**, to take on the space. Having worked on three previous projects with Schuster—who had worked under Kelly Wearstler and Tui Pranich before founding her namesake interior design studio in 2012—the duo has a great working relationship. “Jessie tends to push boundaries, while I’m a bit more reserved,” the client explains. “This dynamic translates well to our design process: When I need to be pushed, Jessie is there to do it, and when things need to be reined in, that’s my role.”



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The powder room features walls swathed in a decorative plaster treatment in a checkerboard pattern by Nota Design. The skirt is in Loro Piana fabric, the ceiling light is by Luigi Caccia Dominioni, and the mirror is a custom antique find from Galaxy Glass.

They also brought on architect Kevin Lichten, who is no stranger to historic New York City buildings, having rehabbed them for more than three decades. “I am intimately familiar with the service entrance of every building on Park Avenue,” he laughs.

The clients’ wish list included a foyer, dining room, and formal sitting room amenable to entertaining, as well as a bigger kitchen, adjoining banquette, and family room. They wanted a bedroom for each of their three children, a play area, and a primary suite adjoined by a study. With so many dedicated rooms, the biggest challenge was coming up with a design that logistically worked for a young family yet respected the landmarked building and its formal bones.

“We gutted this apartment down to the studs,” Schuster tells ELLE DECOR. “It was a beautiful space and very cool, but obviously dated and not conducive to her family’s needs.”

In the foyer, Schuster and Lichten combined two separate rooms located just off the entry elevator, creating one large space that serves as a hub to the rest of the apartment’s rooms. “In big city living especially, there’s a temptation to squeeze everything down, add more cubbies, get more storage, create another room,” Lichten explains. “Giving this entry space breathing room was necessary for the rest of the apartment to work together.”



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In the family room, an artwork, titled *20 Plastic Surrogates*, by Allen McCollum hangs in the corner. The chair is by Cassina.

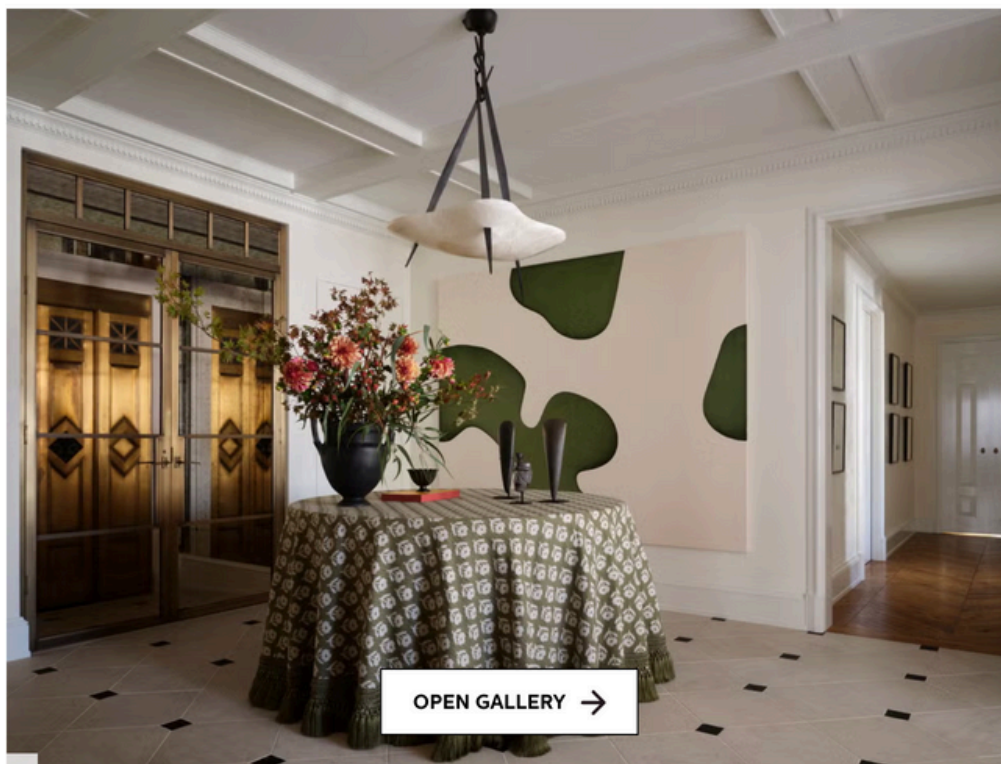
While the layout played fast and loose with historical precision, the team added architectural details that pay homage to the apartment's old-world character. In the entryway, new limestone flooring mimics prewar parquet floor patterns—with a modern twist. “We turned the squares so they were straight, not on the diagonal [like most prewar apartments in New York].”

Throughout, custom decorative moldings, coated in a high-gloss finish, punctuate the wall cornices. The bathtub features an alcove created by a beveled molding—a shape Schuster found in a book featuring a historic Venetian project. “It’s beautiful and unusual, the way it squares off,” she explains. “Architecturally, we wanted to encapsulate an ode to old materials and make it feel aged even though it’s brand new.”

“We wanted to encapsulate an ode to old materials.”

But there are plenty of contemporary flexes throughout, too. In the sitting room, soft neutral furnishings are overseen by a midnight black, Tim Burton-esque Hervé Van der Straeten mirror. Further in, a pair of Soriana chairs in a jubilant Décors Barbares fabric give the living room a pop of maximalist bravado. The powder room’s hand-painted checkerboard walls are a perfect foil for the luxurious Loro Piana fabric sink skirt. “I’m always looking to create something unusual,” Schuster says. “Something off the beaten track that feels fresh yet familiar.”

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Indeed, the best collaborations have a bit of push and pull, something Schuster—whose design mantra entails “challenging the status quo”—says she enjoys engaging in projects with her sister. “She really has a vision and knows what she wants yet allows the process to unfold,” Schuster says.

In this case, that meant agreeing to Schuster’s insistence in swathing the walls of the study in a sultry dark brown fabric. “This was a lot of color for my sister, even though some would consider that a neutral,” Schuster jests. Ultimately, the room was given the brown treatment, made even more calming by a pair of origami-like shades by Parisian artisan Pietro Simonelli that diffuse the room’s natural light.

The client’s response says it all: “It’s exactly what we both envisioned.”



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Entry

Schuster and Lichten gave the entry coffered ceilings in Venetian plaster, complemented by moldings in a high gloss finish. "The entry serves as a directive for the home, so we obsessed over every detail," Schuster explains. "We wanted to get it right so the architecture really sang." The limestone floor tiles are from Paris Ceramics, the Darts Chandelier is by Achille Salvagni, the custom table skirt is in a Claremont fabric with Houles fringe, and the art is by Landon Metz.



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Dining Room

The dining room features jib closets and drawers that cleverly hold the clients' serveware. The vintage chandelier is by Flavio Poli from Dimoregalleria, the dining table is custom with Nero Marquina marble slabs that have been antiqued and tea stained. The rug is custom by Beauvais in Aubusson style, the dining chairs are by Artistic Frame in a Lauren Hwang fabric, the drapery is by Rosenfeld Interiors in Michael Smith and Jasper fabrics, and the sconces are by Le Cann for Studiotwentyseven. The mirrors are custom by Mary Kuzma.



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Sitting Room

The sitting room is swathed in Claremont fabric, the window shade is by Pietro Seminelli, and the ceiling light is by Woka. The custom rug is by Beauvais, the sofa is custom by Ritz Upholstery in a Claremont fabric, the Jean-Michel Frank-style club chairs are in Le Manach fabric. The wrought-iron side table is by Garouste Bonetti, and the vintage cocktail table is by Jacques Adnet.

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Living Room

In the living room, a Hervé Van der Straeten mirror hangs above the limestone fireplace.



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Living Room

A hidden bar opens in the living room.



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Family Room

In the family room, a Flemish tapestry with Prella tassels oversees a Swedish Gustavian chest from Laserow Antiques. The candlestick is by David Gill.





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Family Room

The family room features a Cassina Soriana chair in a Décors Barbares fabric, a custom goat hair rug by Crosby Street Studios, and upholstered wall panels in Aissa Dione fabric.

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Family Room

In the living room, an artwork, titled *20 Plastic Surrogates*, by Allen McCollum hangs in the corner. The chair is by Cassina.



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9 / 15 Kitchen

The kitchen's square footage was doubled in the renovation, now featuring a stunning Calcutta Vagli marble from ABC Stone, complemented by Van Cronenburg hardware. The pendants are by Lisa Johansson-Pape, the aluminium stools are from Finnish Design Shop, and the stretched fabric panels in the glass cabinets are from Scalamandre Faucet. "We really wanted the kitchen to feel warm, so we ran the wood floors into the kitchen, which created a nice juxtaposition to the creaminess and lightness," Schuster explains.

10 / 15 Breakfast Nook

The breakfast nook, just off the kitchen, features a custom banquette by Ritz Upholstery in Houles Vinyl. The chairs are by Laura Gonzalez in Le Manach, the table is by Pluhowski Furniture, and the photograph is of Jackie Kennedy in a ski mask by Harry Benson.



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Sitting Room

In the sitting room, brown fabric covers the walls, with diffused natural light behind shades by Pietro Simonelli.

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Powder Room

"The powder room is spectacular," Lichten says. "Jessie brought in a specialty painter for that, and she did an amazing job." The walls swathed in a decorative plaster treatment in a checkerboard pattern by Nota Design. The skirt is in Loro Piana fabric, the ceiling light is Luigi Caccia Dominioni, and the mirror is a custom antique find from Galaxy Glass.



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Primary Bedroom

The primary room is swathed in a textured Rose Tarlow fabric, and the soft Rose Uniacke drapery is in Samuel & Sons tape and Holland and Sherry. "We really wanted it to feel like a cocoon," Schuster says. The Kelly Wearstler bed is covered in Claremont fabric, the table lamp is from Gallery BAC, sitting atop Karl Springer night tables in lacquered goatskin parchment.



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Primary Bathroom

The primary bathtub sits in a recessed alcove made up of Venetian plaster. The marble is Giallo Siena from ABC Stone, the cabinet hardware is from Van Cronenburg, and the Italian sconces are limited edition in the style of Barovier & Toso Fittings.



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Kid's Bedroom

The boy's bedroom features a screenprint by Jake Longstreth, a Reummler pendant light in silk shade, and a custom rug by Makrosha. The shades are by Rosenfeld Interiors in a Rose Tarlow fabric and Samuel & Sons silk trim. The shearling pillows are by Duc Duc Rocker.



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