

THE DECOR

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PRECISELY RIGHT

When James Huniford is asked by an executive to craft her ideal apartment in Greenwich Village, the result is elegance at its most restrained

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Manhattan is a noisy place, in every sense of the word. You can feel the crowds, the traffic, the fast pace, the 24/7-ness of it. So calm and quiet—in the visual sense as well as the aural one—are great luxuries here. For those and many other reasons, Catherine Montgomery’s Greenwich Village apartment is the height of luxe. The New York designer James Huniford’s subtly orchestrated arrangement of elegant proportions and understated colors and textures—punctuated by bold accents and unexpected juxtapositions of styles and periods—offers a haven from the bustle of city life.

Upon entering the apartment, visitors are greeted by the sight of an austere armchair from the Vienna Secession, which sits next to a beguiling computer-animated projection, *Rapunzel #6*, by Jennifer Steinkamp, with its silently undulating, bright blue-flowered tendrils. The living room, which commands a serene view of the Hudson River, is a study in quiet blues and grays (interspersed with hints of brighter tones) that bring the sense of the water indoors. “The movement of the water, the way it changes color according to the light—I wanted to draw on that for the interior,” Huniford explains, citing the example of the rippling, wavelike pattern of the room’s custom-designed carpet. The furnishings—like the 1950s oak dining table by Guillerme and Chambron, for which Huniford designed chairs inspired by the work of the Viennese architect

LEFT: In the living room of Catherine Montgomery’s Greenwich Village apartment, which was designed by James Huniford, the custom sofa is upholstered in a Pierre Frey fabric, the armchair is by Milo Baughman, and the 1956 cocktail table is by Bruce Goff; the acrylic table is vintage, the sculpture is by Aaron Spangler, and the carpet and dining chairs are custom designs. **ABOVE:** A projection installation by Jennifer Steinkamp and a Vienna Secession chair in the entry. See Resources.



Josef Hoffmann, or the pair of vintage bronze-frame, suede-covered chairs by Milo Baughman next to a curvy sofa—are luxurious but precise, reflecting Montgomery’s own aesthetic. “She’s a clear thinker with an adventurous mind,” the designer says of his client.

Montgomery, who cofounded the tech start-up DaisyBill, an e-billing company for workers’ compensation, knows exactly what she likes—she collects contemporary art, buying purely on instinct, and favors clothing by designers like Rick Owens and Marni—and was looking for an interior designer who would be a partner in creating her urban refuge. She wasn’t interested in rooms that looked “decorated,” and notes that Huniford “rose to the challenge of presenting things in a different way.”

For his part, Huniford felt “an immediate connection” when he and Montgomery first met, which allowed a frank dialogue on the apartment’s design. For example, he felt strongly that the living room seating area should be in the center of the room rather than, as convention might dictate, at the window that looks onto the river. “I didn’t want you to feel like you were sitting at the edge of the room,” he says. “I like feeling centered in rooms. You want to experience the whole thing.” Huniford, says Montgomery, “was one hundred percent right.” By the same token, she adds, the designer is “secure enough to take no for an answer.”

This back-and-forth between two very focused people resulted in rooms that are chic in a second-glance way; nothing jumps out at you. Huniford’s design for the master bedroom, for instance, produced a space that Montgomery calls “luxurious without being



A vintage Gustave Serrurier-Bovy armchair in the study is covered in a Josef Hoffmann fabric, and a custom-made chandelier hangs above a 1960s Italian cocktail table; the painting is by Norbert Schwontkowski, and the curtains are in a fabric by Pollack. **FACING PAGE, FROM TOP:** The kitchen's stools and quartzite countertops are custom designs, the backsplash is Cipollino marble, the double oven is by Viking, and the refrigerator is by Sub-Zero. A mirror by C. Jeré hangs above a 1970s console in the dining area; the drawings are by Sanford Biggers, and the walls are painted in C2 Paint Luxe in Rime. See Resources.





girly.” He transformed what had been a corridor leading to the room into a dressing area that he lined, like the rest of the room, with overlapping sheets of lacquered bark paper, describing it as “a reference to Jean-Michel Frank, but more organic.” The bed, with its cerused oak frame, is low to the floor, which elongates the room’s proportions. On one wall, Pae White’s tapestry *Smoke Sequence 24* reinforces the sense of moody opulence. The guest room is similarly elegant, with waxed-plaster walls and a palette of grays and deeper blues: “The farther away you got from the water,” Huniford says, “the more you had to enhance the color.” The clean-lined bed is flanked by a pair of vintage Paul Frankl bedside tables and Italian glass lamps for which Huniford designed slightly whimsical shades.

The study had a conventional doorway, but Huniford replaced it with what looks like a very deluxe barn door, and he removed a closet along one wall to make way for bookcases, cabinets, and a flat-screen TV. Here, too, are quirky contrasts of objects and textures, like the Art Nouveau armchair, upholstered in a fabric designed by Josef Hoffmann, which sits near a midcentury Italian glass-and-travertine cocktail table. Huniford maintains the apartment’s neutral palette while using fabrics and carpet that incorporate complex mixtures of color. Montgomery’s previous apartment had been entirely white, and ultimately it didn’t suit her. Together, she and Huniford arrived at a solution that was a lot more nuanced. “I didn’t want it to be a white box,” he says. “I wanted it to feel clean and interesting, and sculptural.” Or, as Montgomery herself puts it, “I wanted something more complicated than all white. You’d never choose all-white art; why would you do that to your apartment?” ■





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Ceramic pieces by Juliette Derel hang on a waxed-plaster wall in the guest room; the custom headboard is covered in a wool by Maharam, and Italian glass lamps topped with custom shades sit on bedside tables by Paul Frankl. **FACING PAGE, FROM TOP:** The headboard, bedding, and rug in the master bedroom are custom made by Huniford Design Studio, the wallcovering is by Caba Company, and the artworks are by Pae White (right) and Christian Herzing. The vanity is custom made, the stool by Bruno de Caumont is covered in an Edelman hide, the portrait etching is by John Currin, and the painting is by Eric Blum. See Resources.

The conservatory of a Westchester County, New York, house designed by B Five Studio. The custom daybed is upholstered in Rogers & Goffigon linens, the leather chairs by Mario Bellini are from Cassina, and the rattan armchair and ottoman are by Bielecky Brothers; the rug is by ABC Carpet & Home, and the flooring is Botticino marble tiles by Country Floors. **FACING PAGE:** A hillside is planted with maidenhair ferns, Japanese beech ferns, and hellebores; the gardens were designed by Reed Hilderbrand. See Resources.

