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Tour a Modern Downtown Manhattan Home With French Flair

The Workshop/APD project is all about light, bright, and white tones

By Paola Singer
Photography by Read McKendree / JBSA
December 19, 2022

Art: Angela de la Cruz. Rania Schoretsaniti.

Perched on an impossibly high floor in Downtown Manhattan, with rows of enormous windows facing east, south, and west, Kay Olivia and Ryan Jackson's duplex overlooks the Brooklyn Bridge, the World Trade Center, and the Statue of Liberty. As far as views go, it doesn't get more New York than that. And yet the apartment's interior, in a very modern and abstract way, calls to mind a Parisian address, what with its enfilade of reception rooms, floors covered in herringbone parquetry, and ecru stone mantelpiece anchoring the central salon, which is furnished with eclectic sofas in beige hues.

"We got married in Paris, so we wanted to bring a little bit of that city back to New York," says Ryan. (The couple's 2016 wedding was celebrated near the Place Vendôme, inside the iconic Ritz Paris.) "At the same time, we wanted to display our minimalist design aesthetic and include some of the grittiness of New York; the idea was to find the intersection of all those things." To pull off such a feat, they called Workshop/APD, an architecture and design firm known for conceiving dramatic transformations filled with bespoke elements.

"They have a point of view; they know what they want," says Workshop/APD cofounder Andrew Kotchen, who had worked with the couple once before, updating their summer house in Sagaponack, New York. "This was not going to be a gut renovation, but we did soften the hard edges of the architecture and picked certain moments to create unique details." One of those details is the staircase leading to the bedrooms on the second floor, a once unremarkable rectilinear structure that became a sweeping pièce de résistance with a flowing white plaster balustrade that looks lit from within. That kind of sculptural yet delicate visual is the thread that runs through the 5,900-square-foot property.

In the primary suite, the design team created a curved wall melding into the ceiling then decorated the room with contoured white furniture, as if to match the clouds floating outside the 79th-floor aerie. The home's milky palette (Kotchen describes it as "a thousand shades of white") is something that the couple felt strongly about. "I've always been a minimalist," says Kay Olivia, a former fashion stylist who is now raising two young boys. "It's nice to have one thing to focus on in a room, like a stunning art piece." Given the remarkable collection of contemporary artworks that she and Ryan, a real estate developer, have acquired, treating their rooms as galleries makes complete sense. There is, for example, an alabaster head by Catalonian sculptor Jaume Plensa next to the staircase, and a red ink drawing by German painter Georg Baselitz in the entry hall. "The space was really made for that piece," says Kotchen of the staircase and its sculpture. "A lot of moments were curated around the art."

Not every room in the home has a gallery-like look. The family's kids sleep in vividly monochromatic blue and green rooms, and the media room, site of frequent cocktail parties, is a moody space awash in black, charcoal, and taupe. Yet, somehow, the lighter spaces—particularly the aforementioned enfilade downstairs, a series of rooms divided by ethereal drapes—are the ones that really stand out. "There's an austerity but also a coziness," Kotchen says. "It's a hard-to-achieve balance."

Art: Angela de la Cruz. Rania Schoretsaniti.

1/13

The main salon at Kay Olivia and Ryan Jackson's duplex in Downtown Manhattan anchors a series of reception rooms divided by ivory curtains. Presiding above the stone mantelpiece is a wall sculpture by Greek artist Rania Schoretsaniti. A bespoke two-side sofa was paired with cast aluminum chairs by De La Vega and a handmade lambskin rug from VandenLoom. Workshop/APD worked with the couple to create a minimalist home with nods to both the elegance of Paris and the grittiness of New York.

Art: © Georg Baselitz 2022

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In the main hallway, the eye is drawn to *Ohne Titel* (2021), an ink and watercolor work by Georg Baselitz, an influential German painter, printmaker, and sculptor. Art consultant Barbara Cartategui aided in the curation of the homeowner's collection. Below the painting is a travertine marble stool by Ewe Studio.

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"The dining table is so special, we call it the fault line table," says Ryan of the bespoke burlwood veneer piece, which is split down the middle. "We needed an interesting table, because the room is square." A set of plaster pendants by Stephen Antonson and Tre oak and leather chairs designed in the '70s by Angelo Mangiarotti (purchased from Studio Twenty Seven) complete the space's minimalist yet powerful look.

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Bianco Oro marble covers the kitchen counters and island. The stools, from Studio Twenty Seven, are by British furniture designer Adam Court.

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Art: Eduardo Perez Cabrero/Galeria Marita Segovia

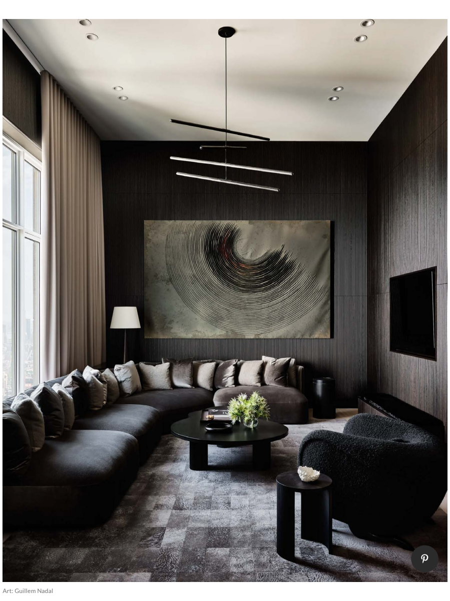
5/13

Workshop/APD softened the edges of the 5,800-square-foot apartment. This breakfast nook by the kitchen, outfitted with a wood table and Tre chairs by Angelo Mangiarotti, has softly curved walls.

Art: Johnny Abrahams

6/13

A corner of the spacious media room has a mahogany grand piano from Wm. Knabe & Co. and an acrylic and oil painting by American artist Johnny Abrahams. "We always wanted a piano for our boys to take lessons," says Ryan, who, together with Kay Olivia, has two young children.



Art: Guillem Nadal

7/13

The media room's main section is awash in black, charcoal, and taupe hues. "We wanted to add a little bit of color," says Kay Olivia, who tends to favor whites. "It's a special room; it feels very cozy when we have cocktail parties." A plush custom sectional, covered in dark taupe velvet from The Sign, was paired with a Persian lambskin rug from Vander Loom and an Aristo side table from Made by Choice. The abstract mixed-media canvas in the back is by Spanish painter Guillem Nadal.

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Art: © Jaume Plensa/Galerie Lelong & Co.

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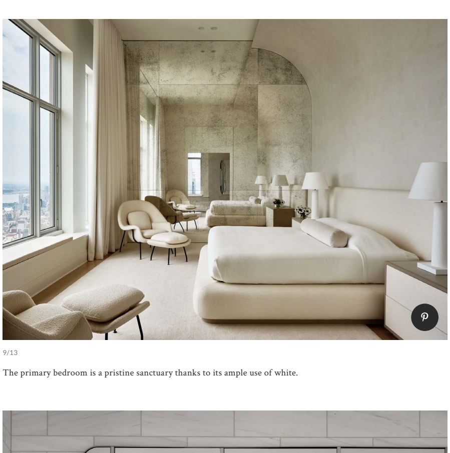
The staircase leading to the bedrooms on the second floor, a formerly unremarkable rectilinear structure, was transformed into a pièce de résistance with a sweeping white plaster balustrade and oak steps. To the left is an alabaster head by renowned sculptor Jaume Plensa. "We spent a lot of time designing these curves, this lighting, and finding the perfect art piece," Kay Olivia says. "From here you can actually see Plensa's huge public sculpture across the Hudson [River], in New Jersey. At night it's all lit up; it's really crazy."



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The primary bedroom is a pristine sanctuary thanks to its ample use of white.

10/13

The primary bath features a custom floating vanity with radiused corners and high-gloss white lacquer, a custom mirror, and custom glass shower enclosure (in reflection). The countertop is made out of Bianco Dolomite marble.

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Custom white-oak millwork in the primary suite closet is illuminated by flexible LED strips from Jesco Lighting. The ottoman is from Blu Dot.

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In one of the boys' rooms, Benjamin Moore's Amsterdam paint sets a youthful yet elegant atmosphere. To complete the monochromatic look, the design team picked a Fort bunk bed from Room & Board in sapphire and carpet tiles from Flor in flannel blue.

13/13

"The idea for the boys' rooms started with a photo of a bedroom in Versailles, where the wallpaper, the bedding, it's all matching," says Kay Olivia. "I loved the monochromatic aspect of it, so we transformed it into a solid color." The wood and steel desk is from West Elm, and the chair is from Crate and Barrel.

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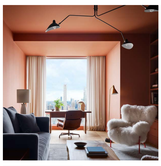

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