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ELLE DECOR Style



Passion counts—right down to the last detail. In Chicago, **Ellen Rakieten** asks two decorator friends to channel her many style enthusiasms. Design team **Roman and Williams** evokes glamorous old Shanghai on Manhattan's Central Park West. **Ben Soleimani** integrates his love of English antiques into his sporty Los Angeles life. **Paula Caravelli** conjures Paris in her New York City apartment. At her home in uptown Manhattan, **Kate Rheinsteinst Brodsky** artfully energizes tradition, while downtown, **Juan Carlos Arcila-Duque** crafts a calm retreat. And our **luxe accessories** provide the perfect finishing touches for any room.



Artful APPROACH

INTERIOR DESIGNER
PAULA CARAVELLI BRINGS A DISTINCTLY
CONTINENTAL FLAIR TO
HER FAMILY'S NEW YORK CITY
APARTMENT

*Text by David Colman
Photography by Simon Upton
Styled by Carlos Mota*

It's hard to mistake Manhattan for any other city. True, some of downtown's cobblestone lanes have a slight whiff of London, and a few brownstone blocks in the west 20s could pass for Boston. But it's the rare street that conjures Paris. Paula Caravelli found one, however, on the sleepy northern reaches of the Upper East Side, a lovely sloping block studded with Beaux Arts buildings. It's not easy to articulate what, exactly, provokes thoughts of the French capital, but it's there.

A similar Parisian spirit subtly pervades the interior designer's home. Composed of two elegantly detailed apartments that have been joined, the place seems so intimate that it is almost surprising to hear Caravelli lives there with her husband, James, and 18-year-old son, Christian. It is even more of a shock to learn that, until recently, it also housed the couple's three other, now-grown sons: Evan, 27; Gregory, 24; and Paul, 22.

In fact, ambiguity and the unexpected are key components of the place, which is less a statement of style (Caravelli is not one for statements) than a delicate balance of disparate elements—and all the more European for that. It's epitomized by a pair of David Armstrong photographs—dreamily blurred images of New York street scenes—that harmonize with





Facing page: Interior designer Paula Caravelli with her husband, James, and son Christian outside their Manhattan apartment. This page: Vintage spoon chairs found at a Salvation Army thrift shop flank a brass cocktail table by Gerald Bland in the living room; the burlap-upholstered settee and gilt-wood console are both Swedish, the zinc roof finial is 19th-century French, and the drawing, *Trees IV*, is by Joan Mitchell. See Resources.

The living room's circa-1970 Karl Springer cocktail table is paired with French marquise chairs; the photographs are by David Armstrong, and the wood statue of a bishop dates to the medieval era. Facing page: Vintage vases are displayed atop a neo-classical Italian commode beneath a painting by Caravelli's uncle Augustus Mino. A vintage secretary holds a watercolor and a mixed-media self-portrait, both by Mino, and an amethyst geode. See Resources.







the huge trees just outside the living room windows and the graceful neoclassical and Regency-style mansions across the street.

Caravelli, who is half of the design team Paula + Martha (her partner, Martha Angus, lives in San Francisco), had no interest in doing up her place with some sort of *idée fixe*. "It's probably a terrible thing for a decorator to say, but I don't like trends," she notes. "I don't work that way. I can't put something in my house, or a client's house, for that matter, if I don't love it."

Of course, lots of designers fill their homes with things they love. What sets Caravelli's apart is a mix of art, furniture, colors, and finishes that feels truly personal. Nothing is chosen merely for its look or effect. But then, unlike so many people who come to New York to try to create a place and a history that square with their dreams, Caravelli's past needed no retouching. She was born and brought up on Long Island in a family brimming with painters and musicians both professional and amateur, where creative impulses were not only indulged, they were expected. "It's in the blood," she says. "We're a family of artists. Growing up, we were always making something—playing music, redecorating, painting. That was the atmosphere."

The apartment provides ample proof of this genetic bent. The foyer holds a sculpture by her sister Janet Buillet. The dining room features a changing array of paintings, including a gorgeous abstract by Caravelli herself, who studied art before turning to design. And scattered





In the butler's pantry, the Perspex wall brackets are vintage American, and the sculpture in the window is by Donald Baechler. Facing page, from top: The cherry-veneered cabinetry in the kitchen was designed by Caravelli, and the refrigerator is by Sub-Zero; the living room's octagonal mirror is by Gerald Bland. The dining table of aluminum and blackened steel, a Caravelli design, holds 19th-century English pine urns from Gerald Bland; the early-19th-century Italian chairs are upholstered in calfskin, and the painting is by Leo Valledor. See Resources.



everywhere are works by a childhood hero, her uncle Augustus Mino, who was an artist and advertising creative director in New York City. As for the piano in the living room, Caravelli grew up playing, as did her four sons.

Of her choice of career, she says with a smile, "Everyone in my family is a decorator—I'm just the first one to do it for a living." Though her talent may be innate, she has honed it over the years, becoming a master at discreetly mixing not only traditional and modern (a vintage secretary with a quirky midcentury French seat; a contemporary dining table and Italian neoclassical chairs) but European and Asian elements as well (a Chinese-style brass cocktail table with Regency-style spoon chairs and a Gustavian settee). Likewise, the apartment's palette walks a pitch-perfect line between rich tones—an array of blues in the master bedroom, the kitchen's brandy-color cabinetry, the cocoa-brown dining room—and a host of soft neutrals. Even Caravelli's one concession to cacophony, a complex collage in her home office, is in restrained black-and-white. "It's so important to be able to come home to a place that has serenity," she says. "That's what I tried to create."

But as any mother of four will tell you, no mere combination of colors and textures can handle everything that life, and children, throw your way. So she has happily embraced one modern convenience notoriously lacking in most Paris apartments. "I believe in closets—everywhere," she says. "You have to have places to put stuff away." And she adds with a knowing smile, "We have a really great housekeeper." ■



The collage in the office is by Robert Greene, the circa-1845 klismos chairs are Danish, and the laminate desk is by Caravelli. Facing page, from top: In the master bedroom, the mid-19th-century Scandinavian bergère and English milk-glass lamp are from Evergreen Antiques; the painting is by Leora Armstrong, the photo work above the bed is by Evan Caravelli, and the cashmere throw is by Williams-Sonoma Home. The blackboard-painted wall in a son's bedroom features a chalk illustration based on ones made by Caravelli's children when they were young. See Resources.