



Custom furniture and Silk Moiré wallpaper imported from Milan give a modern touch to the living room space. Right: In the foyer, a prominently displayed lacquered chest of drawers was custom-made by The House of Clement.



POP LIFE

The House of Clement creates an opulent high-art hideaway on New York City's Upper East Side.

Story by Jennifer Jackson-Outlaw | Photography by Jane Beiles



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earing at the outside of the grand apartment building nestled in Manhattan's Upper East Side, one can comfortably expect all of the apartment homes that lie within to be designed in a traditional fashion. And yet looks can be deceiving.

"When a client is looking to hire a designer, they should remember that eclecticism and originality should always prevail as an interior space. It

does not need in any way to match its outside architecture," explained Gilles Clement, owner of the House of Clement—a full-service interior design firm. "Expectations are the worst enemies of creativity."

Such was the case when Gilles was approached by a couple in their late forties who were looking to transform their pre-war apartment with art deco influences into a home that reflected a more cosmopolitan lifestyle. The space was to serve as a secondary home that they would use for entertaining on the weekends while one of their adult daughters lived there throughout the week.



Two David Hollar paintings provide a playful pop-art contrast to the contemporary furniture

In planning out the project, the client had only two main concerns. First, they were looking for the completed apartment to be designed in such a way to comfortably accommodate up to seven people for their various functions. Also, the wife specifically requested that navy blue be incorporated into the master bedroom as this was one of her favorite colors. Outside of this, Gilles was happily given complete control over the project's direction.

Restarting from Scratch

Gilles and his staff elected to completely gut the apartment in order to start from scratch. "Doing so allowed me to take better advantage of the space, create symmetry where needed, highlight architectural details and heightened functionality. As in most of my projects, I love to break the rules in order for a common space to become exceptional."

It was in these initial stages that Gilles ran into the venture's more significant challenges: work within the limited hours as established





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by the building’s owners. Further complicating matters: any measurements had to include both the building’s hallways and elevators as well as dealing with some of the materials. This meant the concrete walls and aluminum beams that are commonly built within the time period. Luckily, the House of Clement had established long-term relationships with their own construction support to assist them with what was certainly the most troubling part of the job.

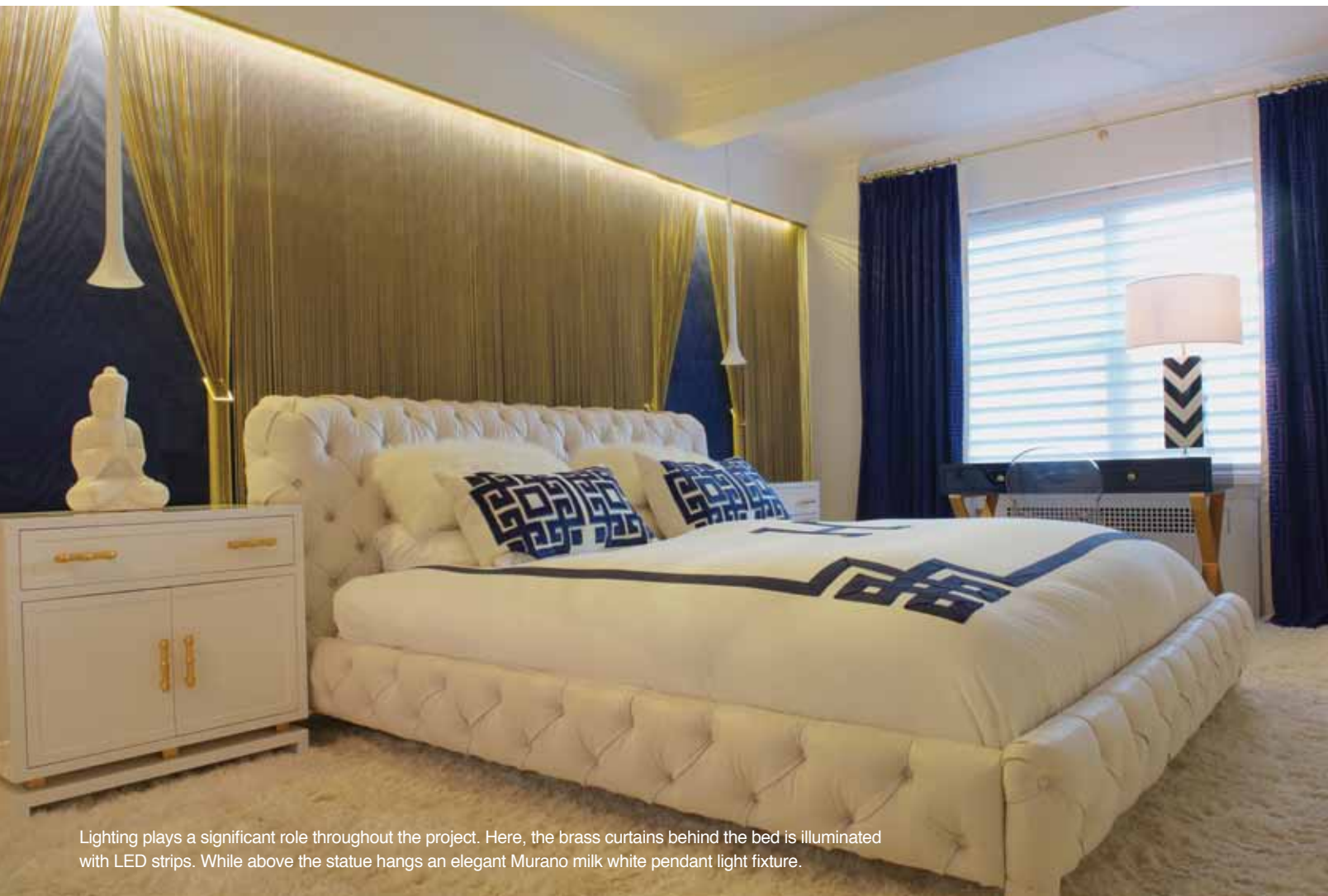
“I have my own team of electrician, curtain installer, general contractor, wallpaper hanger, plumber, explained Gilles. “I always use the same talented and dependable professionals as I know I can count on them to get the job done. These buildings will challenge even the most

experienced designer, “recalls Gilles. “But in the end the rewards are even greater!”

Runway Meets Residence

Once the initial reconstruction of the apartment was completed, Gilles’ team set to create a flat that befitted the city that never sleeps. Because he was given carte blanche direction over the finished space—Gilles found himself drawing inspiration from his own unique signature style.

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Lighting plays a significant role throughout the project. Here, the brass curtains behind the bed is illuminated with LED strips. While above the statue hangs an elegant Murano milk white pendant light fixture.

a huge influence throughout my designs. I truly believe that a home is like a woman, it inspires me in the same way, I look at its shape and its personality and I dress it up in a way that transcends its beauty, its grace and its sex appeal.”

Keeping with this strategy, he made sure that many of the furnishings he selected bore a glossy metallic finish. Gilles also used sensuous fabrics that paid homage to such avant-garde designers such as Jean Paul Gaultier and Christian Lacroix. Throughout the home, the walls were adorned with silk moiré wallpaper imported from Milan. The foyer boasted a brass-infused metallic cowhide rug. In the master bedroom, the king-sized bed frame was completely covered with a tufted fabric. Lighting was also generously used to create a sumptuous atmosphere. In the living room, LED lighting strategically was placed under the steps to create cost efficient lamination in addition to making the space more inviting. LED strips were also used to behind the brass curtains –leading to a Murano milk white pendant hanging above the Buddha statue.

Custom Creation

Most of the items featured were specially made for the client’s home. Gilles is a big believer in hand-made products because it’s a great way to ensure the level of quality and unique choices available for each client.

Whenever possible, the pieces were created by the House of Clement

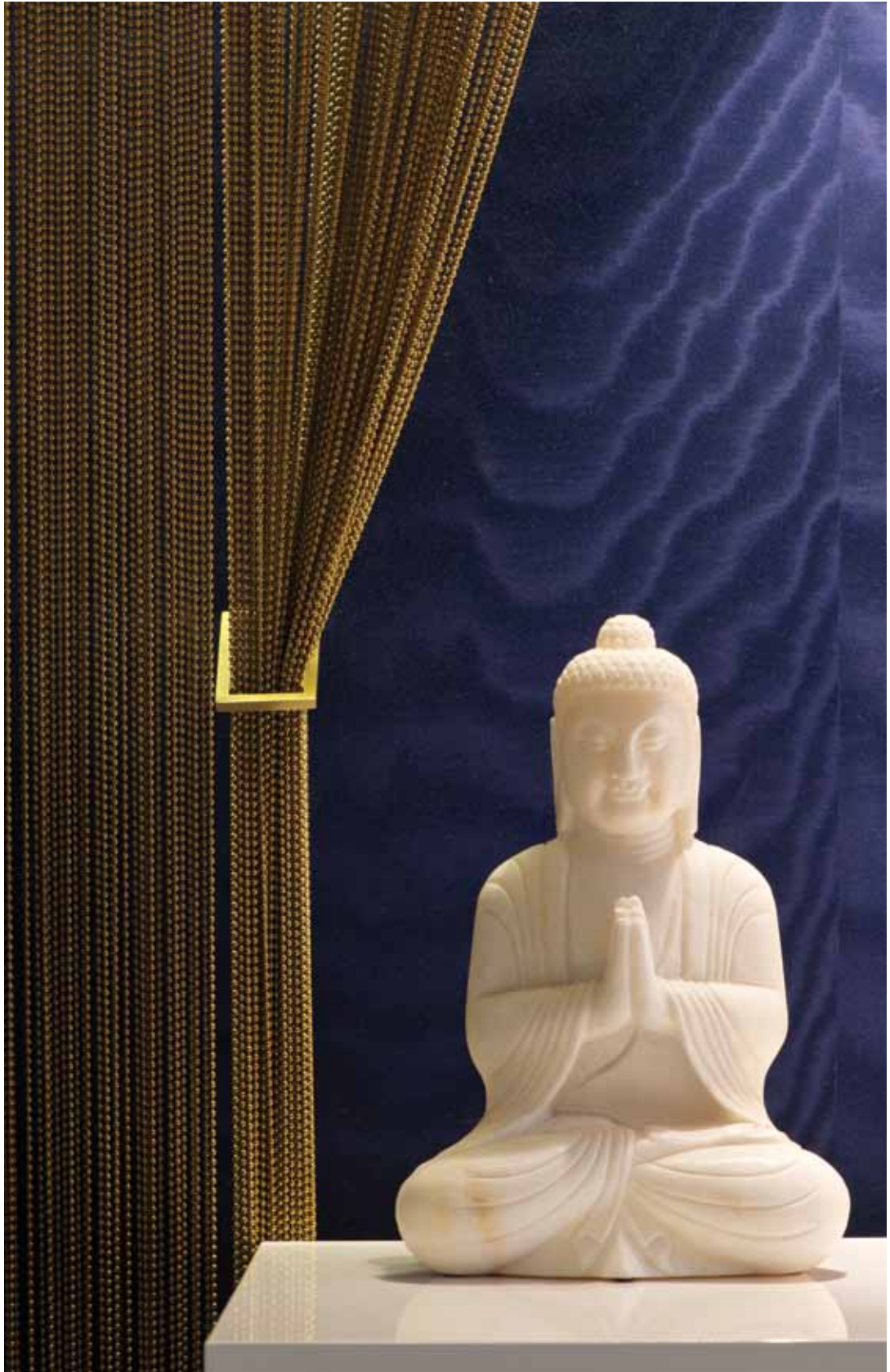
themselves. Along with his busy interior design business, Gilles also owns a 6,000 square-foot plant that manufactures specialty pieces for his customers. Among the exclusive creations exhibited in the home are the dining room banquette and the living room sectional. The design team also crafted the lacquered chest with the brass molding that greets visitors in the foyer.

Gilles commissioned a few pieces to be constructed outside of his factory as well. The rectangular sun mirror prominently displayed in the foyer was made in London. The special brass knobs securing the curtains in the master bedroom were made for the clients in the United States, as was the curtain hardware in the living room. While the wheeled black glass door separating the kitchen and dining room was constructed in Germany.

Artful Finishes

Perhaps one of the most striking features of the completed apartment was the inclusion of two paintings from Hunter S. Thompson and Grace Jones. The artist, who specializes in typographic art comprised of quotes and phrases, is one of Gilles’ personal favorites.

“The client had [no artwork] prior to the start of this project. So after we completed the design phase, I came back with some original artwork to propose to her,” Gilles explained. “I have been doing art consulting for a few years and I am opening an art gallery across my design store in late April 2015. So I have quite an interesting







Gilles' love of Pop-Art influences much of the design strategy throughout the apartment. Here, a serene praying statue of Buddha blends well with the brightly colored wallpaper and brass curtains.



selection-especially pop art and high-end street art. The artist that painted the two portraits in the living room is David Hollier. He is British and I absolutely LOVE his work. The quality is mind-blowing.”

The pieces, along with the carefully placed white statues in the master bedroom and living rooms, helped to solidify a space that was both totally modern yet timeless. And the clients were thrilled with the final results. So much so, that it has led to a lasting business relationship for both.

“I did not know them prior to this project. The clients were actually sent to me by their good friends, for whom I had designed their Westport residence. But since the completion of this apartment, they also hired me to do their Westport home. Which, I must confess, remains the best compliment a designer can receive!”

Resources

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