

DISCOVERIES



AT THE MANHATTAN APARTMENT OF AD100 DESIGNER MARKHAM ROBERTS AND DEALER JAMES SANSUM, DOG HUCKLEBERRY PRESIDES OVER THE LIVING ROOM'S MIX OF ANTIQUES AND ART, INCLUDING AN ART DECO RUG AND FRAMED DIPTYCH OF A JAPANESE SCREEN.

AD VISITS

Mix and Mingle

At home in Manhattan, *Markham Roberts* layers treasures of wide-ranging appeal into one ineffable blend

NELSON HANCOCK
ART: CHRISTOPHER ASTLEY/MARTOS GALLEI

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1. AN ASHLEY HICKS CHANDELIER HANGS IN THE LIVING ROOM, WHERE A BARKSKIN WALL COVERING BY CABA COMPANY SERVES AS A NEUTRAL BACKDROP FOR THE ECLECTIC ARRAY OF CHAIRS AND DECORATIVE FINDS.

2. CHAIRS IN BRUNSCHWIG & FILS FABRICS SURROUND A FRENCH ART DECO TABLE IN THE DINING ROOM, WHICH IS LINED IN MORRIS & CO.'S BLACKTHORN WALLPAPER; CONVEX MIRROR FROM KRB. 3. THE DESIGNER.



In pre-Darwinian times, illustrations of exotic fauna were often based on written descriptions, resulting in depictions of otherworldly composite creatures. It should come as no surprise that Markham Roberts has a soft spot for those antique prints. An animal lover and an eclectic at heart, the AD100 designer has built his name blending the unexpected, eschewing strict period decorating to create an inimitable signature style. Nowhere is it more pronounced than the Manhattan duplex he shares with his partner, the furniture and art dealer James Sansum, and their two dogs, Huckleberry and Harriet.

“There’s stuff from all over,” the designer muses of their heady mix of furnishings, dispersed among four commodious principal rooms, flanking a central stair hall in an 1880s edifice on the Upper East Side. “But if you like it, I think it works well together.” Decorating for himself, he jokes, is like paying Rummikub. “You’ll take something from one place and make it work with something else from another.”

The results feel at once surprising and precise. In the living room, on the lower floor, a contemporary Ashley Hicks

chandelier illuminates a circa 1920 Japanese lacquered table and an array of plush seating in varied materials and colors—all surrounded by a surfeit of art and objects made across five centuries and nearly as many continents. The dining room opposite, wrapped in a classic William Morris wallpaper, features the French Art Deco table where Roberts can be found spreading out materials for his myriad projects, including product lines like his upcoming collaboration with Soane Britain. The kitchen beyond it, Roberts confesses, doesn’t get much everyday use. But, he notes, “it feels good.”

Before launching his firm in 1997, Roberts cut his teeth at the firm of Mark Hampton, who became a formative mentor, exposing the young Indianapolis native to the fundamentals of serious interior design. But he also attributes his distinctive approach to the influence of three women: his mother, his grandmother, and the arts patron Anne Bass. While his mom

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1. HUCKLEBERRY SNOOZES IN THE BEDROOM, WHICH IS LINED IN MARBLEIZED PAPER. THE CHANDELIER IS BY ARTERIORS, AND THE FAUX-BAMBOO FOLDING CHAIR IS FROM THE COLLECTION OF BROOKE ASTOR. 2. ASSORTED ART AND AN ITALIAN MOSAIC

MIRROR SURROUND THE ENTRY'S ANTIQUE DUTCH CONSOLE. 3. THE COUPLE'S BATHROOM GIVES WAY TO THEIR DRESSING AREA, WHICH IS OUTFITTED WITH A RUG BY STARK, CEILING LIGHT BY ARTERIORS, AND A CHAIR IN PIERRE FREY'S TIGRE VELOURS.

informed his penchant for bright colors and calico quilt patterns, her own set the standard for layering French, English, and Italian furnishings. Years later, when he visited Bass's Fifth Avenue apartment during his first week working for Hampton, that space cemented his love of the mix. To this day, he notes, "that's the best example of decorating I've ever seen."

Those inspirations and more converge at his own apartment, where the rambling upstairs suite includes a sun-drenched study, dressing area, and bedroom. As with the lower level, these private quarters reveal a tendency for the bold, whether an English Victorian slipper chair clad in Pierre Frey's iconic Tigre Velours or an antelope-print Stark rug. Ever present is the menagerie of small creatures that make him smile, among them a midcentury leather frog from Japan, a finial in the shape of a lion's head, and his latest obsession, French Palissy ware.

"The thing about living in New York and not having your eyes blindfolded is that you see everything," Roberts explains. Even still, the designer frequently returns to animals. He gestures to a favorite 18th-century print and laughs, "I think it's a marmot." —DAVID FOXLEY

