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Black half-moon chairs by Milo Baughman sit before pale double doors with black lacquer detailing.

A HOME FIT FOR THE DAKOTA

In one of New York City's most iconic historical buildings, Sasha Bilkoff executed a transcendent and tailored lifestyle.

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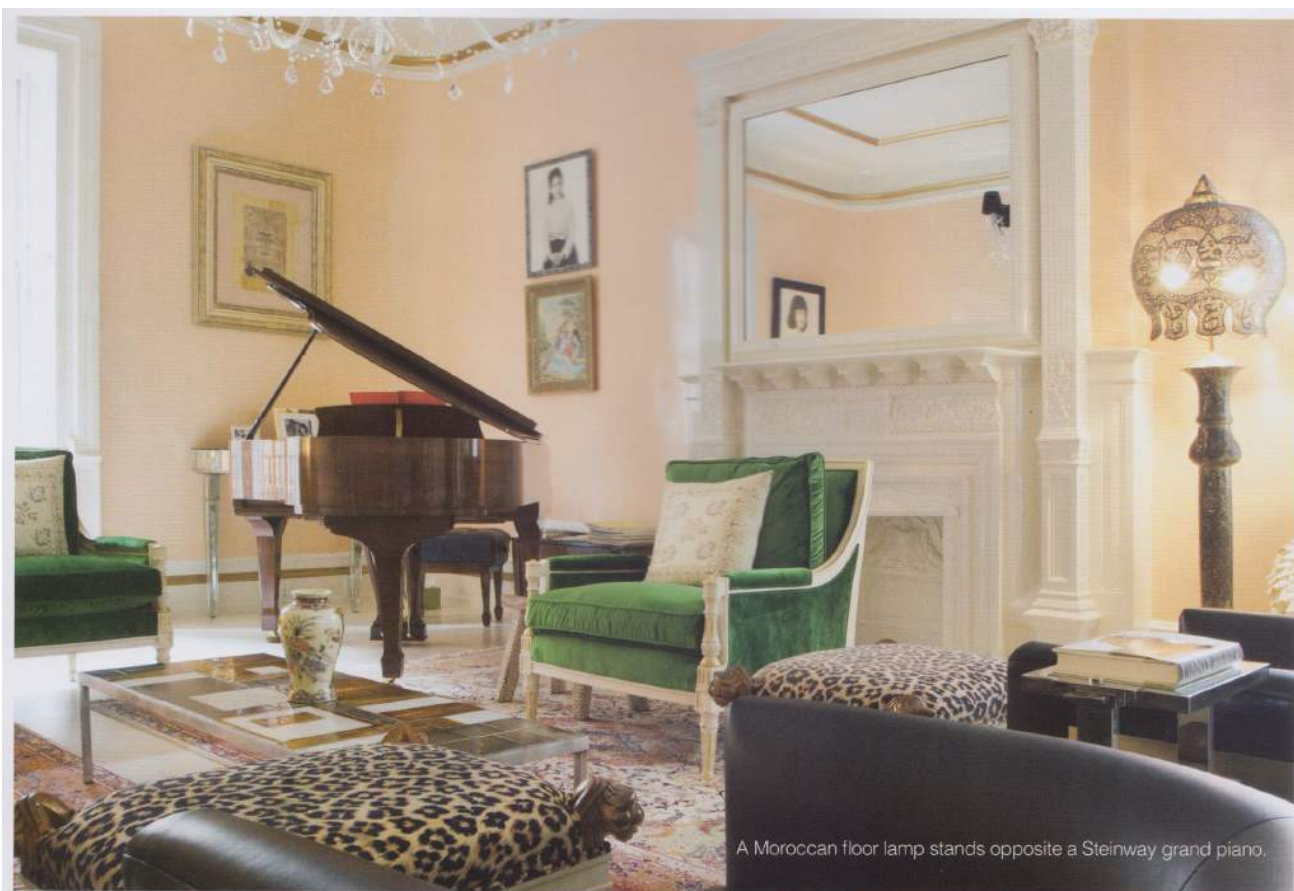


When Sasha Bikoff sets out to design an interior space, she orients herself to her clients and strikes for their hearts: doing so allows her to corporealize their spirits or desires into vibrant, tailored rooms. Indeed, when you see a Bikoff space, you have no defense against it. It cuts through you with the keen edge of genius.

"It is more than just the design of the home for me," Sasha explains when asked about her process. "It is about having a deep understanding of my client—everything from the shoes on their feet, the cars they drive, to their passions and travels from the past. Everything should have meaning."

Enter the Dakota. Constructed in the 19th century and designed by architect Henry J. Hardenbergh, this grand and remarkable cooperative apartment building on the Upper West Side of Manhattan is an embodied synthesis of international influence: German Renaissance architecture, with its steep roofs, oriel windows and balustrades, is layered over the French-inspired design of the interior layout, with its central courtyard. Beyond the building's inherent grandeur—which is vast, luxurious and more than can be recounted here—the Dakota has played host to many storied individuals. Famous men and women such as Lauren Bacall, Leonard Bernstein and Boris Karloff have dwelt here. John Lennon kept six apartments at the Dakota, and was fatally shot outside its doors.

It's just one apartment we're captivated by today. It may have once belonged to Judy Garland, and it most certainly belonged to Sasha Bikoff's first major client. "The homeowner was my mother, and the entire interior design of the apartment is a homage to her," she confesses. "I wanted to cap-



A Moroccan floor lamp stands opposite a Steinway grand piano.

ture all of her passions and inspirations in life." Sasha shares that her mother was a pianist and a ballerina. Much of the art displayed on the walls of her home reflected her Iranian heritage, while Sasha sought elsewhere to capture her mother's personality (and Studio 54 days!) through an admixture of Old World luxury, '50s nostalgia and '70's glam. "From glamorous lacquered walls to exquisite hand-painted wallpaper by de Gournay, to my mother's inherited Persian Tabriz silk rugs, the apartment is a true reflection of her," she says.

Layered Declaration

From the first moment you lay eyes on the lifescape crafted for this Dakota interior, you feel embraced and inspired. The eye glides over layer after layer, touching upon striking walls, fascinating art and heartbeats of color throughout. Sasha's talent in crafting layered compositions that entice without exhausting is a key aspect of her ingenuity, nurtured by her





An oak table by Timothy Oulton is lined with Julia Gray chairs upholstered in salmon Scalambre satin. A collection of Versace china for Rosenthal is displayed on wall shelves.

fundamental grounding in the arts— she studied fine arts and art history at George Washington University and the American University in Paris.

Every incredible human edifice, whether architecture or interior design, must stand upon a solid foundation if it's to reach the heavens. Here, that solid foundation is the first layer upon which vintage furniture, fine fabrics and vital color are added; the original properties of the Dakota itself, and her mother's Persian Tabriz silk rugs. "We redid the floors to the exact pattern of the original floors," Sasha explains. The new pickled wood floors adhere to the original pattern, while also lightening up the rooms with their pale, whitewashed quality. The Persian Tabriz rugs—stunning pieces of art in their own right—inspired Sasha's color palette for the rooms in which they lay underfoot. These rugs invite emerald, ultramarine and rose to the select gala of colors cavorting through this sumptuous home. Sasha also points out that they lacquered the walls, most remarkably in one of those intense accent colors. "Getting a perfect lacquer finish takes a great deal of skill and is very labor-intensive. The trick is all in the prep when you are painting and sanding," she confides. "But the finish is a beautiful high-gloss lacquer statement wall that

makes the room glisten and illuminate when you walk in." She even lacquered the fireplaces in white, emphasizing their original ornamental molding details.

In other rooms, Sasha layered silk wallpaper onto the walls to cultivate a certain mood. "Hand-painted silk wallpaper was installed on some of the walls by letting gauze cure on the walls beforehand," she notes. In the master bedroom, an opulent Japanese-inspired depiction of wisteria drips down the walls from the high ceiling; the wisteria seems to hang caught between breezes across the walls. "My mom had once lived in Aix-en-Provence and loved the fields of lavender," Sasha reminisces. "de Gournay's hand-painted Wisteria wallpaper was a natural fit."

Colorful Commitment

So many people—indeed, the majority—have flinched away from bright, vivid colors in their homes; this is a trend Sasha Bikoff bucks in her own work and can't wait to see change. "I think people are afraid to use color and tend to opt for neutrals because it's safe," she says. "Smaller rooms are ideal for color because it creates a little jewel box of a room." This philosophy is modeled splendidly in the Dakota study, with its blue-lacquered walls:



The golden-yellow decorative background element, original to the Dakota, plays well with lacquered walls of Yves Klein-style blue.





A Pierre Cardin white-lacquered console table sits under a Holly Hunt mirror edged in zebra-patterned material, through which a vintage clock can be seen on the opposite wall.



far from being overwhelming, the gleaming blue soothes the eye. It provides the perfect setting for a handsome Ralph Lauren Home desk and accompanying chair, backed by a glistening white, sealed fireplace. The fireplace mantel, original to the Dakota, serves as an impromptu

bookshelf featuring a row of books flanked by antique crystal urns mounted on bronze, with bases of lapis lazuli—glamorous bookends for this incredible jewel of a study. A groovy Pierre Cardin white-lacquered console table displays more books, and a Holly Hunt mirror edged in zebra material reflects a vintage clock on the opposite wall. “I used darker tones with the zebra stripes, ebony furniture and deep red spindle chairs, which all are inspired by my mom’s cherished Persian rugs,” Sasha notes. This same philosophy produced the salon chairs covered in jade Ralph Lauren Palace Silk Velvet, and the malachite green of the



Brunschwig & Fils silk curtains in the closet.

Sasha doesn’t stop at playing with lively colors: she began her career as she means to go on, making fearless choices to achieve stunning backdrops for everyday life. She embraces bold patterns as readily as vibrant shades,

which are scattered throughout the apartment in the study’s zebra print-upholstered Ralph Lauren desk chair, the salon’s leopard print-covered ottomans and the mesmerizing custom Robert Allen malachite lampshades in the expansive once-bedroom now walk-in closet. Pattern becomes art when it’s writ large in wall-coverings, as shown by the de Gournay Wisteria wallpaper in the master bedroom. A de Gournay wallpaper also sheathes the walls of the apartment’s entryway: the lush foliage illustrated in monochrome across the L’Eden hand-painted silk wallpaper captures the attention of everyone[OK as edited?] who steps



In the master bedroom, lilac bed curtains of Oscar de la Renta silk play off a Timothy Oulton velvet sofa in purple, while a Philip and Kelvin LaVerne-designed table (circa 1960s) steals the show.



through this apartment's doors.

Detailed Enchantment

An extravagance of captivating details put the finishing touches on this apartment, delicately forging disparate elements into a cohesive lifescape. "The style is meant to channel a mix of French rococo and French midcentury for a chic aesthetic that also draws upon Italian antiques, whimsical accents and a touch of disco," Sasha explains. "Having lived on the Le Saint-Louis and attended the Sorbonne, I also incorporated my mother's appreciation for French aesthetic."

Lavish chandeliers perfectly encompass these intentions: the multitiered Marie Antoinette chandelier by Bisazza, featuring black lampshades among scintillating crystal, cuts a dramatic figure over the salon, while another Marie Antoinette chandelier illuminates the dining table in white light. A breathtaking French Bronze Palm Chandelier by Baguès is an absolute showstopper in the entryway. Elsewhere, the lighting stands as fascinating sculptural components—two floor lamps by Tommaso Barbi lend metallic organic elements through the shapes of flowers and leaves.

Sasha's tribute to her mother and French influences extend to opulent detailing as well. "Throughout the entire apartment," she says, "24k gold leaf detail on the moldings and fireplaces pay homage to Versailles and Marie Antoinette." There's more gilt to go around: in the walk-in closet, an antique giltwood mirror shaped like a sunburst ornaments one wall, while 18th-century gilded trumeau mirrors Sasha found while antiquing in Paris flank the salon's double doors leading to the study.

Art can be functional as well, which is shown to compelling effect in the fashionista's dream of a walk-in closet. (Yes, Sasha converted one of the apartment's bedrooms into an expansive walk-in closet!) Built-ins were installed in the walls to provide floor-to-ceiling hanging space for garments, tastefully covered with crisp shades when access is not required. On display in this space are various fine shoes that are pieces of art in themselves—a pair of Manolo Blahniks and a pair of Alaïa heels perch on a Dorothy Draper-designed dresser between snake-wrapped lamps



found at auction in Palm Beach. A striking Charlotte Olympia boot in red and black is displayed on a rustic stool by Andrianna Shamaris with ornamented legs. Shoes aren't the only functional art on display—Sasha also understands the beauty of Louis Vuitton, and one of LV's exemplary cases is displayed on the study's fireplace mantel.

Not all art is meant solely to be admired, and Sasha's design aes-

thetic in this Dakota apartment revels in that philosophy. Art is meant to be moved through and lived with—it uplifts our days, captures our spirits and can even be worn or traveled with in several fantastic cases. When crafting a tailored lifescape for her clients, whether her beloved mother or a stranger she's only just met, Sasha brings her nuanced layering, bold colors and captivating details to bear. She creates stage after stage where life can unfold.



A glossy black dresser with white accents designed by Dorothy Draper offers a stark counterpoint to the closet's extravagance.



Resources:

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Comfortable seating is provided by a De Sede vintage sofa with antique pillows from India and a cashmere and feathered blanket; an acrylic coffee table designed by Sasha Bikoff sits before the sofa on a Persian Tariz rug.