

STEP INSIDE

A CENTURY ON CENTRAL PARK

Mid-century touches from 1960s Italy shape one designer's vision for bringing a New York apartment into the modern age.

By Fawn Galli | Photography by GAP Interiors/Costas Picadas



One of several striking uses of marble throughout the home is certainly the antique French Louis XVI mantel in Breccia Medici marble.



Curves enchant in the 1960s Italian brass wall sconces and the custom-upholstered 1980s Italian lounge chairs in two-tone corduroy and wool.

Even the designer fell in love with this apartment and its views that line up with the treetops.

A vintage 1960s sconce and pendant lamp over the piano allow mood-lighting options.

Few things breathe life into a room like live plants on a large scale. Palms are as classic as they come.

Overlooking historic Central Park, the stage is set for elegance with chevron hardwood floors and walls in Tundra by Benjamin Moore.

Penthouse views can be spectacular, but, in my book as a designer, the real place to be is closer to the tops of the trees, where the views are equal parts earth and sky. Those are just the kinds of views I had the good fortune of working with from this refined sixth-floor flat overlooking Manhattan's Central Park West.

Designed in 1898 by Robert T. Lyons, the 122-year-old building enjoys a timeless location along the park where the city's four seasons are on magnificent display. Its formidable construction provided the original occupants with enchanting views of the park at the turn of the century—35 years after Central Park first opened to visitors. Travel six floors up, however, and this four-bedroom apartment's layout remained broken up into an awkward series of small parlor rooms that hadn't been touched since a light renovation in the 1970s. Vision and modernity were well overdue.

This project was my third collaboration both with my client and with New York City-based architect Douglas C. Wright, who waltzed into the fragmented 3,200-square-foot space with utter confidence and knocked down the walls to create a lofty, spacious living and dining area that's in constant conversation with the views.

Opening up the space allowed the three sets of canted windows along the east-facing exterior wall to share one another's light. What's outside the windows—the trees of Central Park, the Upper West Side's other historic buildings and the changing sky—is a consistent reminder of the present moment enhanced by the spontaneity of a bird flying by, a gust of wind through the trees, or a wispy lavender cloud.

The home has a soulful aesthetic but with a discipline in the way objects are placed. The furnishings are a combination of antiques and modern pieces in bold, colorful fabrics.

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A glass partition wall allows light from the living room to pass into the moody entryway, with black-and-white terrazzo floors by Eco-Terr and walls awash in Slate Teal by Benjamin Moore. A vibrant blue that glows mysteriously in the diffused light, the hue lends a dramatic contrast to the pale gray walls of the dining room, visible through the open doorway. There, the zigzag lines of a 1960s German pendant light by Florian Schulz punctuate the scene with a design that manages to be exaggeratedly large-scale and delicate all at once.

Round the corner from the dining room and it takes a minute for your eyes to adjust. The living room is filled with light. On the far end, a marble fireplace is surrounded by a floor-to-



Custom details, such as the arm that wraps around the cushion on the living room's velvet sofa, add up to one highly bespoke interior.

A pair of Azucena stools in the living room bay window are upholstered in African mud cloth found at a market in Harlem.



ceiling mirrored wall, reflecting both the interior and exterior views. The room's furnishings are an ensemble cast of custom and contemporary pieces. Even though this airy gathering space is filled with some of the world's greatest design icons, the room is deeply personal. Like the family of five that lives there, each piece has its own raison d'être.

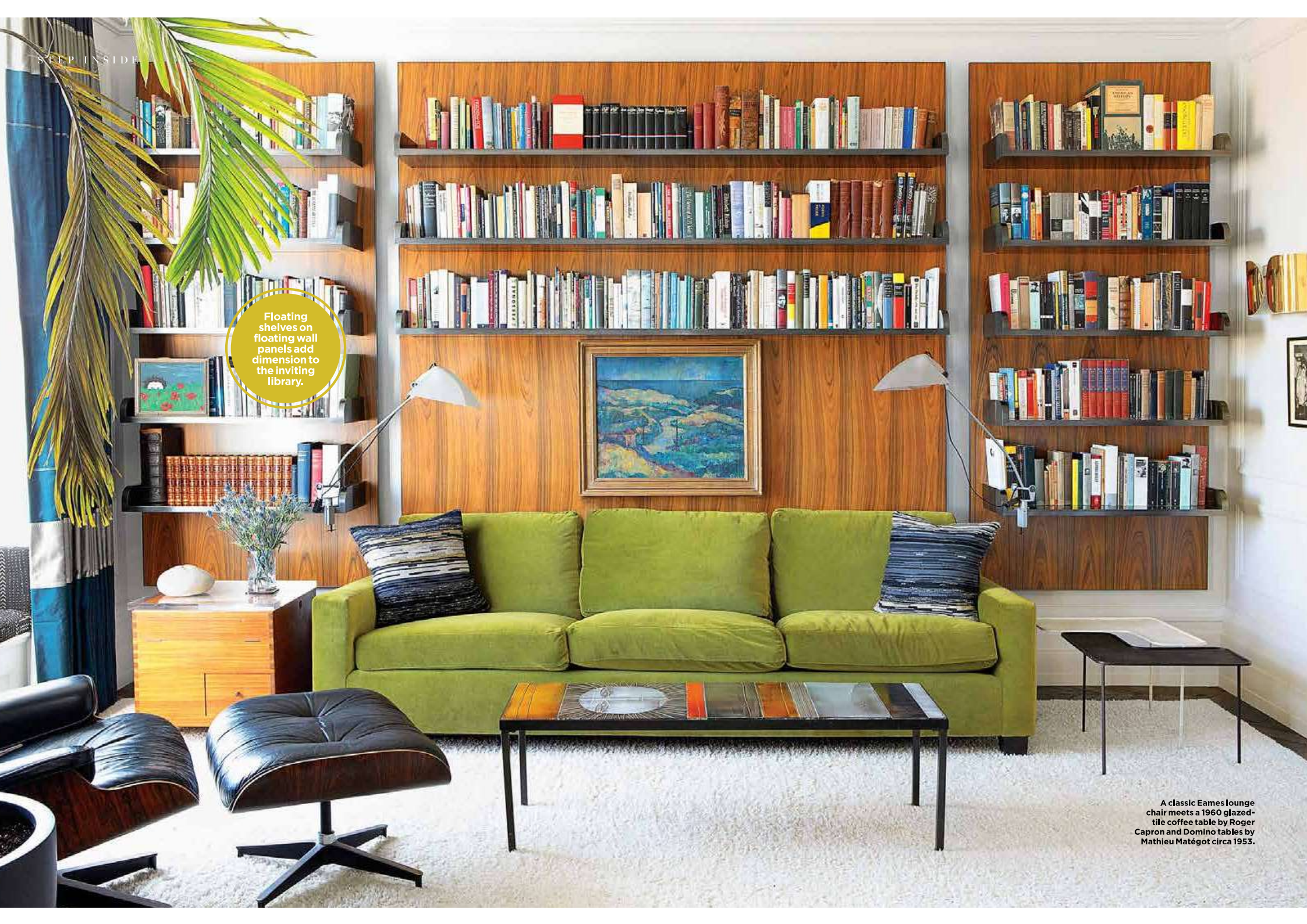
Nearly every reimagined room holds a coveted piece from Italy's design heyday of the 1960s, if you know where to look. Most of the time, that involves looking up, where you'll see brass pendants, a hexagonal textured glass-and-brass flush mount light by Stilnovò, and a brass-and-opal glass chandelier, among other pieces. Foglio wall sconces by Tobia Scarpa for Flos bend away from the walls in curls of brass that bring warmth—and a warm glow—to both the living room and the library. In the latter, a glazed-tile coffee table by Roger Capron circa 1960 and the client's existing sofa recovered in cypress green velvet received a mid-century-inspired

Above the dining table, a 1960s pendant lamp works to complement the 1960s Italian Modernist side chairs below.



Floating shelves on floating wall panels add dimension to the inviting library.

A classic Eames lounge chair meets a 1960 glazed-tile coffee table by Roger Capron and Domino tables by Mathieu Matégot circa 1953.



backdrop: a custom bookshelf wall clad in walnut veneer by Tabu.

Since I had collaborated with my client before, I was familiar with the carefully collected vintage pieces she already owned, as well as her hungry curiosity about cutting-edge contemporary design and all things beautiful. Like my client herself, her collection of furnishings is diversely gifted, worldly and incredibly sophisticated. She knows what you mean when you say you want the place to feel "Milanese," which is what I said when I saw the space for the first time. (Milan's interior designers join its

fashionable reputation in making the metropolis a style hub appreciated the world over. Their inclinations often blend a modernist sensibility and preference for classic craftsmanship with the sleek, subtle formality of Italian design.)

That instant connection was all it took for us to create a home with a mix of personal inspiration, Old World classicism and mid-century Italian panache. Coupled with its placement on the edge of the renowned urban oasis that is Central Park, this apartment is ready to relish the views for at least another century.



From the mid-century French sconces with bare bulbs to the slabs of Italian marble, the master bathroom has international flair.

What occurs in nature, like this Arabescato Corchia marble from Artistic Tile, is often most dramatic.



A low settee placed in front of the window in the master bedroom makes an interesting alternative to the expected bench at the end of the bed.

Framing portraits, even very simply, keeps loved ones in your daily life.