

#1:

For a dapper New Yorker, Nick Olsen crafts a *kaleidoscopic fantasia* of freewheeling color, one-of-a-kind *auction finds*, and yin-yang contrasts—plus a bedroom as *handsomely tailored as a bespoke suit*.

INTERIOR DESIGN: NICK OLSEN INTERVIEW: KATHLEEN RENDA
PHOTOGRAPHY: FRANCESCO LAGNESE PRODUCER: DAYLE WOOD



For the living room of an apartment on Manhattan's Upper East Side, designer Nick Olsen transformed a George II-style mahogany console into a self-serve bar with chalky white paint and a black marble slab. The opaline glass-urn lamp and mahogany mirror—repainted in gold and gray, respectively—were all “diamonds in the rough bought at auction, then tweaked,” Olsen says.

Olsen gave pride of place to a Damien Hirst print in the living room, where walls lacquered in Pratt & Lambert's March Wind help brighten the north-facing space. The eight-foot, 38-inch-deep custom sofa—upholstered in a Kravet burgundy cotton velvet and based on a design by the late Portuguese designer Duarte Pinto Coelho—is "so cushy, you sink right into it," Olsen says. The antique club chair is covered in a Dedar blue-and-burgundy striped linen blend. The circa-1970 coffee table—another auction find—"adds Studio 54 glitz."





A ceiling in Benjamin Moore's Chic Lime lends a flash of bold color to the foyer. The room's decor "is a seesaw mix of shiny and matte, austere and over-the-top," Olsen says. **OPPOSITE:** Color maximalist Olsen earned an architecture degree from Columbia University and worked for Miles Redd before launching his design firm.

Call me clairvoyant, because I sense a colorful character lives here.

NICK OLSEN: He's definitely larger than life! Outgoing and witty, always fast with a quip—he's a boldface name in Manhattan's real estate circles and a veteran of a reality TV show. The apartment reflects his fun, funny personality, and his enthusiasm for fashion and contemporary and Pop art. Did I mention he's a total dandy, with pocket squares and velvet slippers galore? Of course the rooms couldn't take themselves too seriously! There are lots of winks and pastiche, vivid hues, and tailored touches. It's like a swanky Technicolor take on neoclassicism.

KATHLEEN RENDA: And the irreverence starts at the front door.

The stage is set from the get-go. The apartment, in a stately 1941 Art Moderne high-rise designed by Emery Roth, has a classic layout: You enter through a vestibule that opens onto a sizable foyer. Those are first-impression spaces—more decorative than functional—so why not play that up? I nodded to the building's glam heritage by striping the vestibule in black and white and adding an urn-topped column pedestal. Then I cranked the volume higher in the foyer. There, it's all pediment-topped mirrored niches, more columns and urns, and a lime-chartreuse ceiling. I embellished the matte black walls with rectangles outlined in white and gray. The look, more graphic than cartoonish, is a fresh riff on a design at the Charlottenhof Palace in Potsdam, Germany. It's not a practical space—there is no furniture!—but it is certainly dramatic.

The fearless blue in the living room is also an attention-grabber.

Aside from being the homeowner's favorite color, it was a solution to a problem common in prewar apartments: The living room is an elongated rectangle—it goes on forever—and there are just two asymmetrical, north-facing windows. That's it for sunlight! Drenching the

walls in a shiny, lacquered royal blue bounces the skimpy light around, creating glints and reflections. The color is intense—I pulled it from the room's circa-1880 Persian rug—but it's not too dark or moody. It also works with everything from the acid green chintz on the 19th-century Louis XVI-style bergère to the black glass atop the 1970s chrome-and-brass coffee table. And it sets off the burgundy velvet of the custom sofa,

antique rug. To make sure the room doesn't feel too overstuffed or closed in, I hung a large-scale, Dutch-inspired carved mirror over the sofa.

What's your secret for getting furnishings from different eras and in a range of hues to play well together?

I lie awake at night, mentally reconfiguring all of a room's elements. I obsess about adjacencies, transitions, and the harmonizing of opposites:

refined with casual, austere beside decadent. I'm addicted to buying vintage pieces at auction houses and tinkering with them to create push-pull tension. Like the auction finds in the dining room: I ebonized the round Regency mahogany table and had the Louis XVI-style chairs reupholstered in cobalt leather. The blackness of the table and the chairs' masculine square backs counter the fantastical vines on the scenic de Gournay wallpaper. I wanted to paint the ceiling pink as a final touch, but the homeowner balked—it was a bridge too far. Luckily, he was game for everything else. He isn't afraid of the mix, and he's very visual, which is evident in his outfits.

The master bedroom is like an homage to haberdashery.

It's the equivalent of a Savile Row suit. The walls and nailhead-trim headboard are swathed in a handsome windowpane wool plaid, a navy with silver stripes. Very debonair and natty, and a toned-down departure from the rest of

the apartment. But this is a quiet retreat for sleeping, which is what you want a master bedroom to be.

How is it that each room is unique, yet the apartment as a whole feels unified?

By repeating colors—black, royal blue, chartreuse—you create continuity and a narrative through-line. More important, the proportion and placement of each individual piece is stand-alone strong. You could strip away all the color, take everything to neutral, and the rooms would still work. Not that I would ever do that!



which is low and loungey and perfect for the parties the owner loves to host.

And then you flip the color scheme in the den, with red walls and a blue sofa.

It's a cocoon room where the homeowner watches television, so the walls could be cozy. They're a deep persimmon linen. The blue of the velvet sectional was drawn from the Chinese carpet, which dates to the 1850s—obviously, I like to kick-start a room with a rug! I added some exotic patterns: a kilim textile covers the ottoman, and a 19th-century armchair was reupholstered with an



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The kitchen's cabinets are painted in a wine red from Fine Paints of Europe, in a high-gloss finish that "helped the small space feel bigger," Olsen says. The grille doors on the dining room's Regency sideboard are lined in chartreuse silk. The office's Eileen Gray day-bed is upholstered in a Holland & Sherry wool felt with Passementerie trim. An Osborne & Little linen warms up the walls of the den; the Dune sleeper sectional is in a Kravet velvet.



The matching Holland & Sherry windowpane wool plaid on the walls and headboard takes the master bedroom "in a menswear direction," Olsen says. A sleek polished-nickel lamp from Gracious Home and an alabaster lamp bought at auction are paired atop a 19th-century Queen Anne-style japanned chest of drawers. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES