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CLEAR THINKING

FASHION DESIGNER JILL STUART REDEFINES FAMILY LIVING
IN A GLASS-SHEATHED DOWNTOWN NEW YORK CITY PENTHOUSE
THAT IS AS SOOTHING AS IT IS STYLISH

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Facing page: Fashion designer Jill Stuart with Madeleine, a Maltese, at her Manhattan penthouse, which was designed by Seligdor Architects; the sofa and ottoman are by BAB Italia. This page: In the living room, Vica armchairs upholstered in a Rigors & Goffigon fabric, a rug by Carini Lang, Geisha by Julian Schnabel, a sculpture by Donald Baechler, and a painted-milk-glass panel by Dan Christensen; the Gabriella Crespi table and the FontanaArte floor lamp were both purchased at auction. See Resources.

Ghada Amer's *Noires* hangs above the living room fireplace, which has a black-granite base; the vintage daybed is by Poul Kjaerholm. Facing page, clockwise from top left: Florence Knoll sofas by Knoll and a photograph by Candida Höfer. On the terrace, silicone planters by Paula Hayes and Design Within Reach chaise longues. The kitchen cabinets are by Bulthaup, the vent hood and cooktop are by Küppersbusch, the stool is by BassamFellows, and the framed wood-block print is by Helen Frankenthaler. A custom-made table in the dining room; the vintage light fixtures are by Carlo Scarpa, the painting is by Sue Williams, the candleholders are by Ted Muehling, and the silk dhurrie is by Vanderhurd Studio. See Resources.



THOSE SEEKING TRANQUILLITY rarely look to New York City to supply it. Yet fashion designer Jill Stuart, known for flirty dresses favored by celebrities such as Kate Bosworth, Leighton Meester, and Hilary Swank, found exactly that in her serene SoHo penthouse.

Stuart and Ronald Curtis, her husband and the CEO of her eponymous clothing company, traded Upper East Side classicism for downtown minimalism two years ago: a full floor in the Urban Glass House, a striking 12-story apartment building that was legendary architect Philip Johnson's last project before his death. The sun-drenched space comfortably accommodates the couple and their daughters Morgan, 21; Chloe, 18; and Sophie, 13, with six bedrooms and five bathrooms, while more than six dozen floor-to-ceiling windows and a 2,000-square-foot terrace offer 360-degree views of downtown Manhattan and the Hudson River. "It's very quiet up here, like an oasis," Stuart says. "I love how I can look out the window and see the Statue of Liberty or relax in my bathtub and watch boats go by. That's true peace."

Stunning vistas aside, the couple was lured by the expansive layout of the top-floor retreat. The distance from the media room across to

the dining room runs a loftlike 67 feet. "We saw countless apartments in Manhattan, and what was really great about this one was its horizontal configuration," says Curtis, who preferred it to the narrower multifloor places they considered. Annabelle Selldorf, the noted New York City-based architect who executed the interior design for the building, concurs. "It has a very nice flow," she says. "You're in one coherent space. It's never schizophrenic."

Some of the coherence comes from the meticulously chosen furnishings, ranging from a Mira Nakashima bench that greets guests in the entrance hall to the refined Florence Knoll sofas presiding in the living room. Both women were enthusiastic about incorporating selections from Vica, a German home-furnishings company founded by the architect's grandmother and relaunched by Selldorf. The slender, elegant pieces are installed in nearly all the common spaces, ranging from simple armchairs and a console with a custom-made marble top in the living room to stainless-steel-and-white-lacquer bedside tables housed in the master suite. "I believe there has to be a certain hierarchy in decor," explains Selldorf, whose design firm's most distinguished



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commissions are showcased in a new book, *Seldorf Architects* (The Monacelli Press). "Vica furnishings are classically modern and really discreet, so they serve more as background pieces."

One notable exception is the exquisite Corian-top dining room table with rosewood legs, which stands near the double-sided fireplace and is complemented by a pair of vintage hanging lights. "We were all clear that it needed to have a calm—and white—surface," recalls Seldorf, who had the table custom made for the Stuart-Curtis household. "It's very special," Stuart says. "Annabelle is even considering adding it to the Vica line."

To echo elements found in the original Glass House, Johnson's celebrated residence in New Canaan, Connecticut, Seldorf selected chevron-patterned oak floors that tested both the architect's and clients' patience ("we bleached them, and it was hard to get the color just right," Stuart laments) yet serve as proof of their painstakingly particular ways, not to mention similar sensibilities. "I wouldn't call Annabelle and my wife snobs, but they are both very refined, and that shows," Curtis says. "Neither is happy unless she is studying every nuance of something."

Another polite bone of contention was the shimmering Venetian-plaster walls: Stuart and Curtis craved them, Seldorf was apprehensive. In the end, the architect relented, with spectacular results—the polished finish provides a silken background for a cutting-edge contemporary-art collection that includes works by Ghada Amer, Donald Baechler, Banksy, Willem de Kooning, Candida Höfer, Richard Prince, and Sue Williams. "I don't think I appreciated what a three-dimensional quality the waxed plaster would lend to the space," Seldorf admits. A series of Julian Schnabels graces the long corridor to the master bedroom, and like almost every image in the place, they incorporate a ribbon of blush tones. "I've always been attracted to those shades—they're soft, pretty, and sexy," the fashion designer says of these splashes of color in an otherwise neutral penthouse.

"The art keeps the apartment alive and changing and contemporary," Seldorf says, "but I think what I like best here is how private and protected the place feels, despite all the windows." Stuart is in full agreement and revels in her bespoke setting: "The proportions are just right, and the light is abundant. I love coming home every day. It's just the best place to live." ■



In Morgan's bedroom, an MDF Italia aluminum bed, lacquer sideboard from the Conran Shop, and rug by Vanderhurd Studio; the view is of downtown Manhattan. Facing page, from top: Jules Olitski's *White on White* hangs above a Jasper Morrison bed from Cappellini flanked by Vica bedside tables in the master suite; the small painting is by Lisa Yuskavage, the Gio Ponti chair is from Cassina, the daybed is from Calypso Home, and the rug is by Carrei Lang. A glittery hanging lamp adds glamour to the sleek master bath. A Gio Ponti vanity, stool from Charles, Thomas Ruff nude, and Lynda Benglis sculpture in the master bedroom. See Resources.

