

FURNITURE

On Both Coasts, Enterprising Design Galleries Have Curated Ultra-Luxe Apartments

At noteworthy addresses in San Francisco and New York, furniture dealers Gabriel & Guillaume and Galerie Philia have found ideal spaces in which to create immersive exhibitions.

by Tim McKeough | May 9, 2021

With showroom shutdowns, canceled art and design fairs and collectors intent on avoiding crowds, gallerists have adjusted to a dramatically different way of doing business. Many have responded with inventive offerings ranging from Zoom-based gallery walk-throughs to exhibitions presented exclusively online.

But, as two current shows in New York and San Francisco demonstrate, one of the most satisfying recent developments is even more immersive — by-appointment exhibitions hosted in houses and apartments, where visitors can immediately get a feel for how they might live with the pieces on view.



Galerie Philia has arranged a show of its contemporary furniture in a duplex apartment in New York's Walker Tower. Top: Galerie Philia's staged apartment (left) isn't the only one currently on view. Gabriel & Guillaume, which specializes in 20th-century pieces, has furnished a space (right) at Fifteen Fifty, a residential skyscraper in San Francisco. All Galerie Philia photos courtesy of the gallery and Gabriel & Guillaume photos by Douglas Friedman unless otherwise noted

In New York, [Galerie Philia](#), known for its presentations of cutting-edge contemporary design, recruited the architect and furniture designer Pietro Franceschini to curate an exhibition of the gallery's works in a two-story apartment in [Walker Tower](#), an [Art Deco](#) skyscraper designed by Ralph Walker in 1929.

Franceschini, who was born and raised in Italy but now lives in New York, says he and the gallery, which has permanent outposts in Geneva, Singapore and Manhattan, began working on the project last summer, after it became clear there would be no quick end to the pandemic.

"We thought it was a good time to do something, because with COVID, there's not so much going on," he says. "We wanted to help the design world move on by doing something interesting. We like the idea that at a time when people can't travel and things are locked down, we can bring seventy pieces from all over the world together."

Franceschini says he took a somewhat minimalist approach to furnishing the unit in order to let the pieces breathe rather than piling on too many accessories. But the end result is still a dramatic departure from a white-box gallery. "An apartment is ideal for a furniture gallery," he says, "because you can see the pieces in their intended destination, which is a real, functional home."

Of course, this apartment happens to look like the home of a friend with exceptional taste who embraces the unexpected. Franceschini played off the black-and-white interior of the apartment with pieces featuring primitive shapes and plenty of texture from metal, wood, stone and cement.

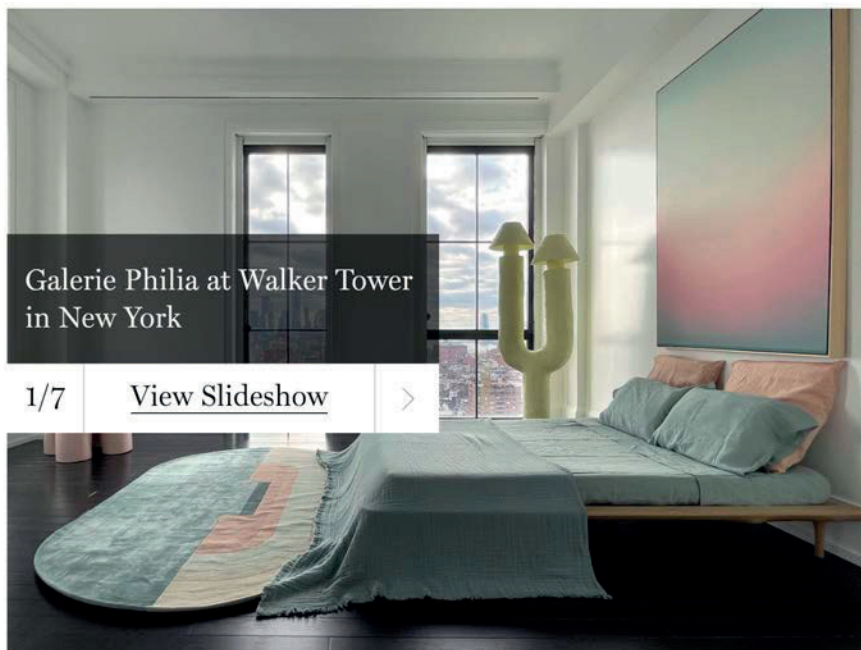


Galerie Philia asked furniture designer Pietro Franceschini to curate the Walker Tower exhibition. Photo courtesy of Pietro Franceschini



For the living area, Franceschini chose a largely neutral palette, selecting [Nina Edwards Anker's Twist sofa](#), [Paul Matter's Monolith floor lamp](#), [Rick Owens's](#) triangular [Alchemy chairs](#), [Frédéric Saulou's Lunaria center table](#) (on the floor), [Lucas Marten's](#) waxed-concrete [Sten side table/stool](#) and Franceschini's own nubby [Bling Bling chair](#). A hint of color is provided by the green [Life on Earth side table](#) by [ROOMS](#).

The living room includes a plush [Twist sofa](#) by [Nina Edwards Anker](#) composed of two volumes that slither together, a [Life on Earth side table](#) made from a hefty cylinder of green volcanic rock with a pitted finish by the Georgian studio [ROOMS](#), three-legged bronze-and-leather [Alchemy chairs](#) by [Rick Owens](#) and a [Bling Bling chair](#) by Franceschini himself, which has a curly lambswool seat atop bulbous ash-wood legs.



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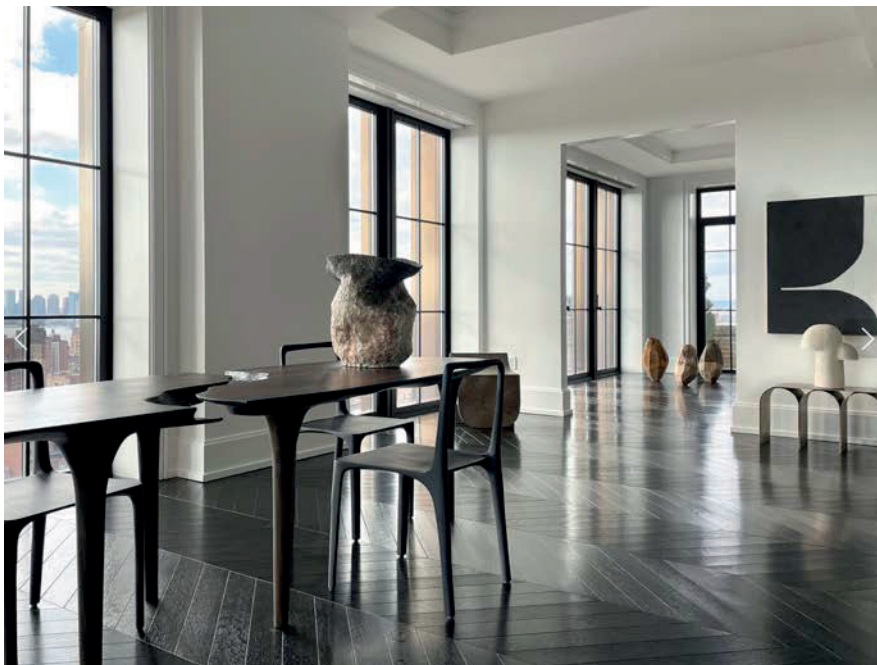


Some pieces were crafted especially for the exhibition, including a pleasantly plump [pink-hued cement chair](#) by Philadelphia-based [Studio Noon](#) and a hand-carved wood dining table by French designer [Cedric Breisacher](#).

Franceschini hopes visitors will find the presentation, which is on view until May 15, refreshing. "When you step in, the old dilemma between what is functional and what is pure aesthetics falls away," he says.



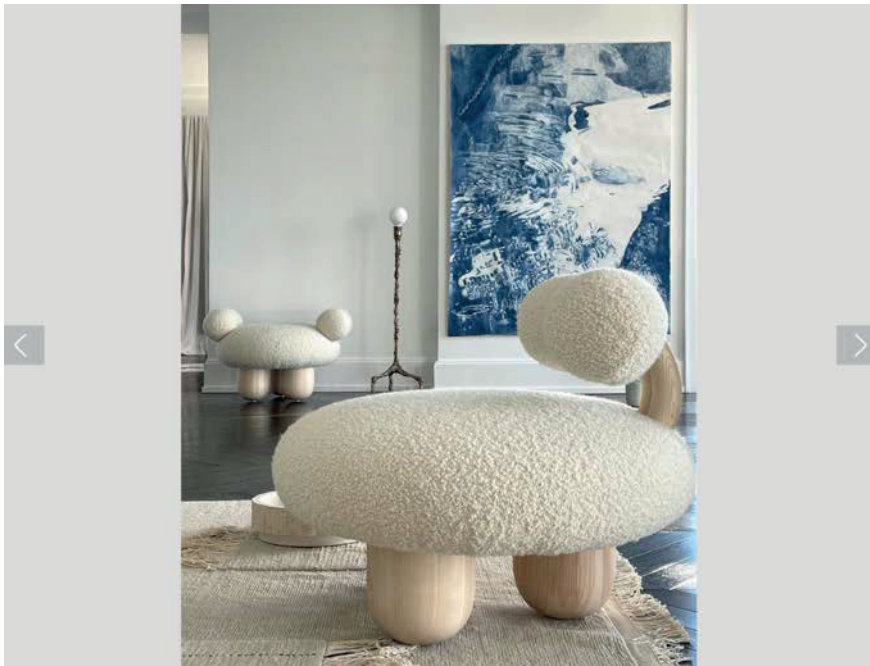
Theo Pinto's canvas *Late Summer Twilight* sets the tone in one of the bedrooms. It's complemented by Studio Noon's *Elephante Stool IV* and Léa Mestres's *Robert* lamp.



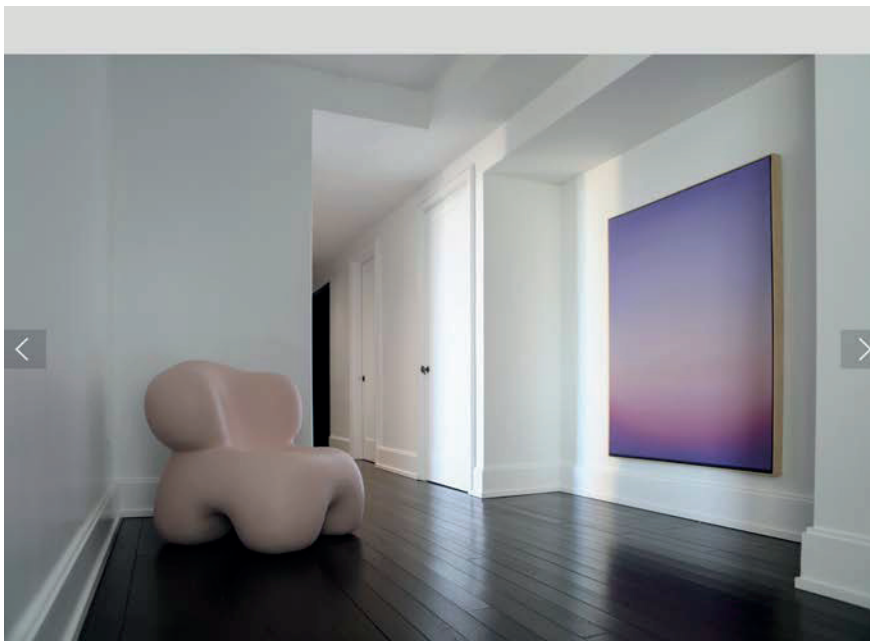
The dining area is defined by Cedric Breusscher's sculpted oak table and *Dot* chairs. The ceramic vessel is by Jojo Corvillat.



In a room that Franceschini calls the gallery, a *Miami* floor lamp by ROOMS joins Evan Fay's *Lawless fauteuil*, a Frédéric Saulou coffee table and Niclas Wolf candle stands.



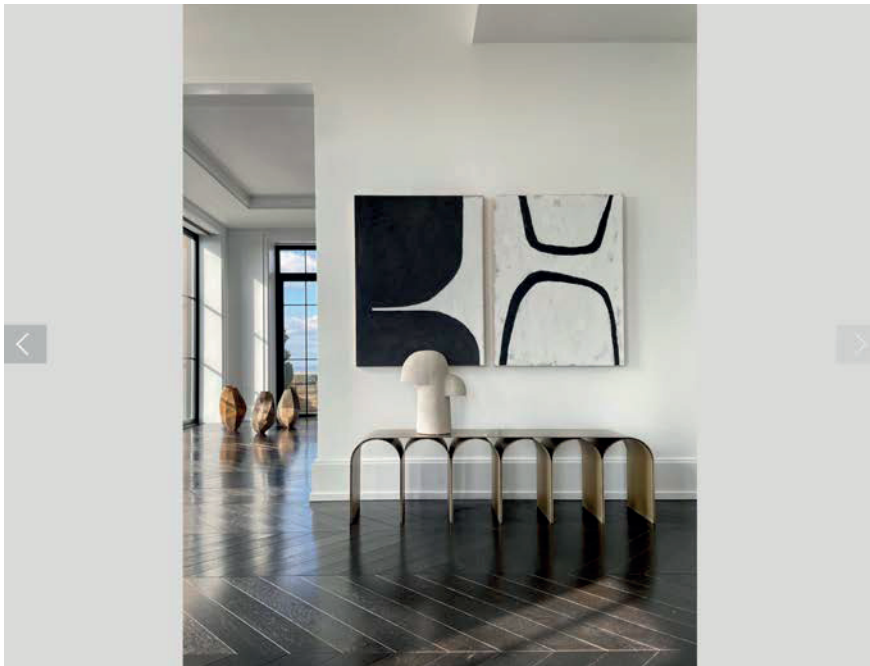
In the living area, Franceschini's own *Bling Bling* chair and ottoman and William Guillon's *Sweet Thing IV* lamp play off of Flora Temmouche's large-scale pencil drawing *Portrait de Rousseau*.



Theo Pinto's 2020 work *Beautiful Pollution* shares the hallway with Studio Noon's *Cherub* chair.



The meditation room is sparsely furnished with a pair of ash *Butterfly* stools by Cedric Breisacher and a marble-and-concrete *Gestalt* bench by Frederik Bogarts and Jochen Sablon.



Against the wall in the living area, Franceschini placed his [Brass Gold Arch](#) bench and Elisa Uberti's [Edifice](#) table lamp beneath [Untitled 19](#) and [Untitled 11](#), two 2020 works by Fino Prydz. Sculptures from Sylvia Eustache Rools and [Jérôme Porcino's](#) "Corps Céleste" and "Telluric" series can be seen in the next room.

Get the Walker Tower Look



[Elisa Uberti](#)



[ROOMS](#)



[Nina Edwards](#)
[Anker](#)



[Studio Noon](#)



[Pietro](#)
[Franceschini](#)



Gabriel & Guillaume used mid-century modern furniture throughout the Fifteen Fifty penthouse in San Francisco, including a chandelier by [Angelo Lelli](#), shearing [Shell](#) armchairs by [Carlo Hauner](#) and [Martin Eisler](#) and a [jacaranda bookshelf](#) by [Jorge Zalszupin](#) in the living room. Though it has a mid-century feel, the [terrazzo side table](#) is a contemporary piece by [Portego](#).

Nancy Gabriel and Guillaume Excoffier, the founders of Gabriel & Guillaume, a gallery based in France and the United Arab Emirates known for its international mix of 20th-century design, have long understood the appeal of showing their wares in residential settings. With no permanent gallery, they started out by hosting exhibitions in different residences around Beirut and Paris in 2013, which they designed as complete domestic environments, each in a different style. “We design the interior, we do the layout, we create the mood, and we select the pieces,” says Gabriel.



With no permanent showroom, gallery founders Guillaume Excoffier and Nancy Gabriel have focused on mounting exhibitions in residential environments. Photo by Chérine Jakhdar

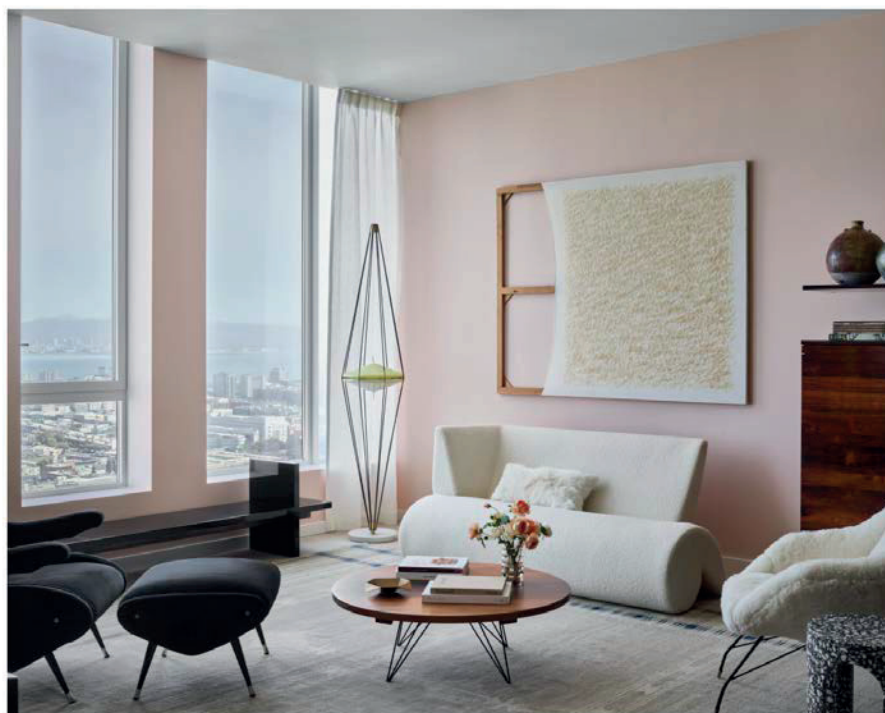
In 2019, they exported the concept to New York, with an exhibition at 111 West 57th Street, a super-tall residential skyscraper designed by SHoP Architects with interiors by Studio Sofield, which is ongoing. This past October, they opened another in San Francisco, at Fifteen Fifty, a 40-story apartment tower located at 1550 Mission Street.

“We’ve talked many times about getting a permanent space,” Gabriel says. “But every time we got caught up in some other new experience or new opportunity. We’ve noticed that our clients are excited by these exhibitions, because every time it’s in a new location, with a new setup.”

On view through the month of May, the San Francisco exhibition is hosted in a comfortable space that truly feels like someone’s home, complete with pistachio and pink wall paint, patterned wallpaper, drapery, rugs, pillows, books and accessories.

The gallery offerings on display have a collected vibe, including vintage treasures like

a long 1950s jacaranda sideboard by Joaquim Tenreiro, 1950s lamps by Angelo Lelli, 1988 Betty dining chairs by Martin Szekely and numerous ceramic vases by Ettore Sottsass installed alongside contemporary works like a free-form rug by Marguerite Le Maire, a bench by Ranya Sarakbi and Niko Koronis and a marble side table from Matter Made.

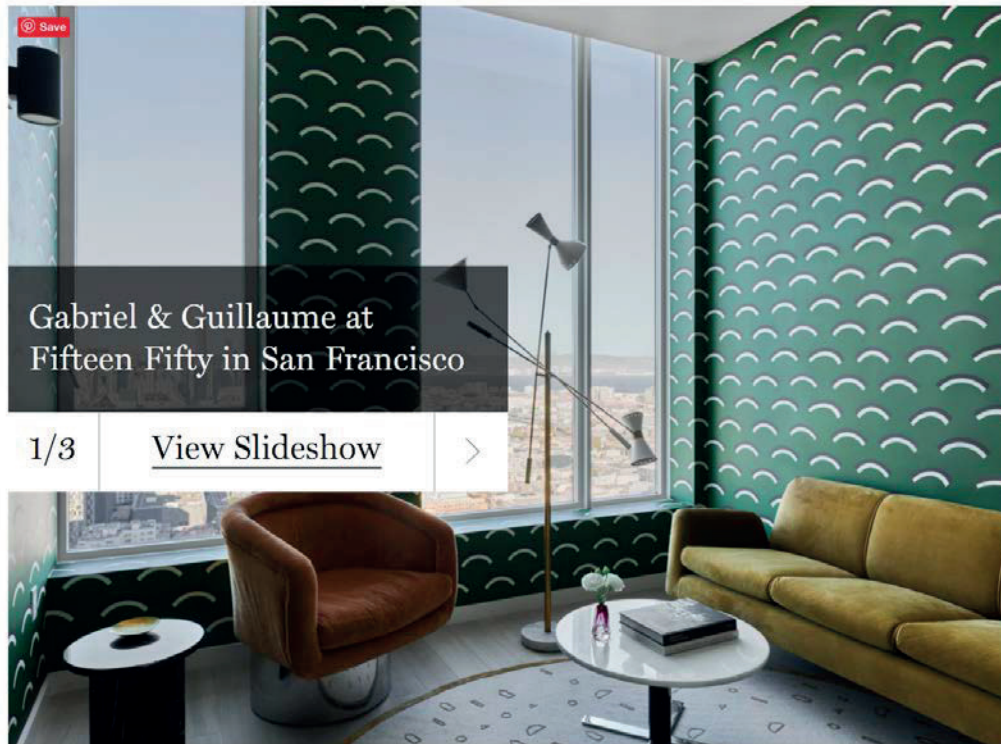


The living room also features Lelli’s A12628 floor lamp, a 1950s coffee table by Acácio Gil Borsoi, a 1980s sofa by Martin Szekely for Galerie Neotu and a limited-edition NRB bench by Ranya Sarakbi and Niko Koronis for Gabriel & Guillaume. The contemporary work above the sofa is by Israeli artist Amikan Toren.

Art from the San Francisco gallerist Jessica Silverman and additional rugs from Beirut-based Iwan Maktabi complete the environment.

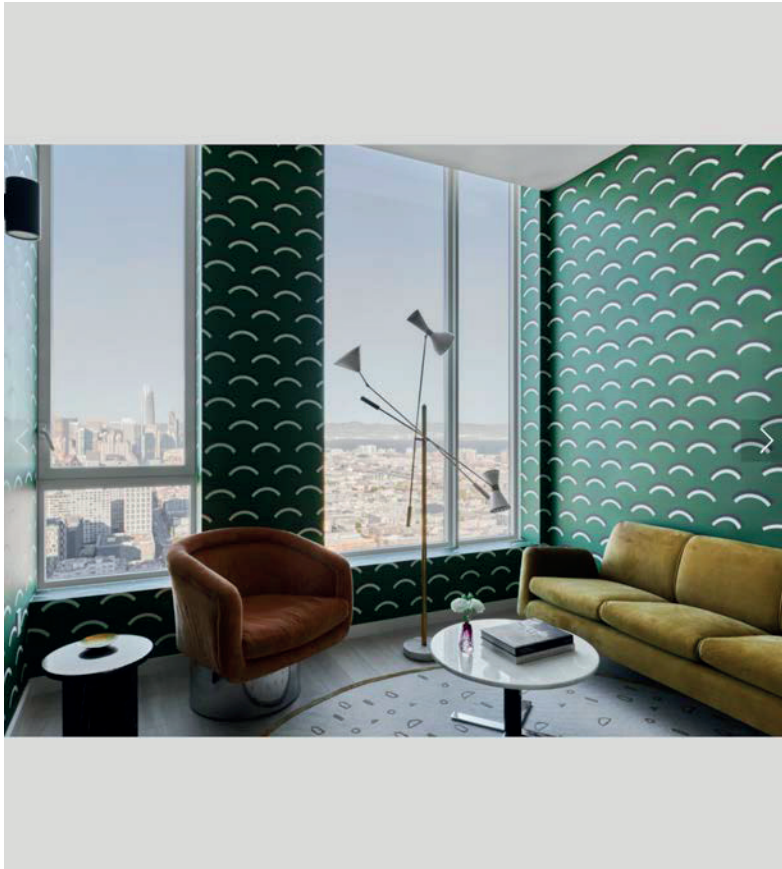
For those unable to visit in person, the gallery offers [virtual tours](#) of its New York and San Francisco exhibitions, with the help of 3D technology from [Matterport](#).

Gabriel & Guillaume's American exhibitions were organized with help from Guillaume Coutheillas, founder of the San Francisco-based branding firm FrenchCalifornia, who also orchestrated an exhibition for New York's [Maison Gerard](#), featuring the work of [Guillerme et Chambron](#) in a Brooklyn townhouse designed by the Brooklyn Home Company, earlier this year.

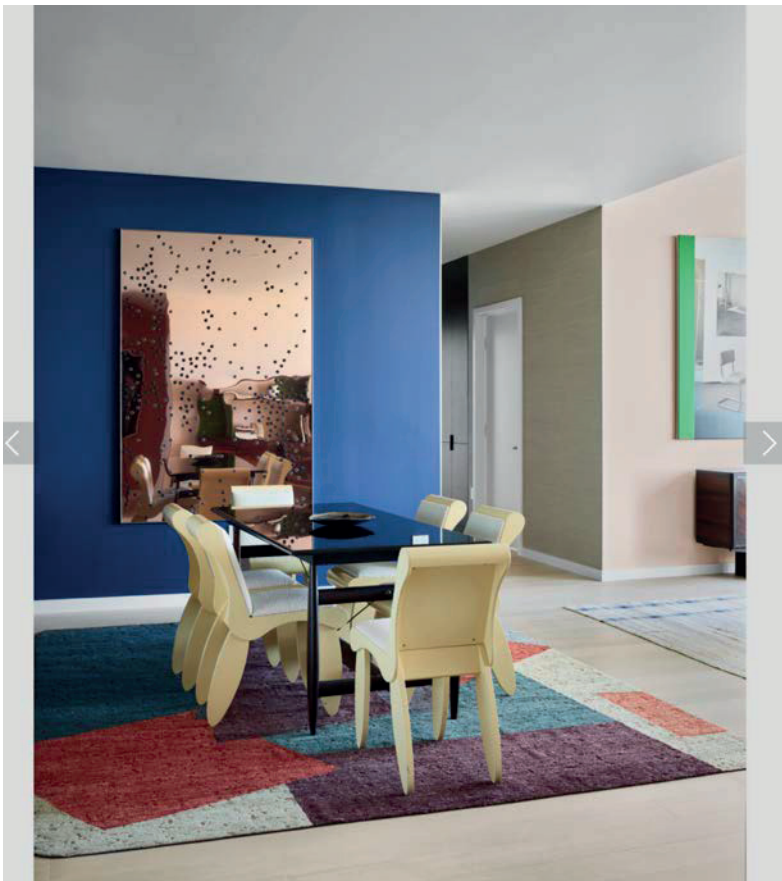


Coutheillas's clients include both design galleries and developers, and he realized that hosting exhibitions in residential spaces would be mutually beneficial: Gallerists get to present their pieces in intimate environments while developers gain top-tier model units without major expense. "It's a win-win for both parties," says Coutheillas.

And now that visitors have experienced just how compelling such settings can be, residence-based exhibitions will likely continue to thrive — even when it's safe to face the design-fair throngs once again. **I**

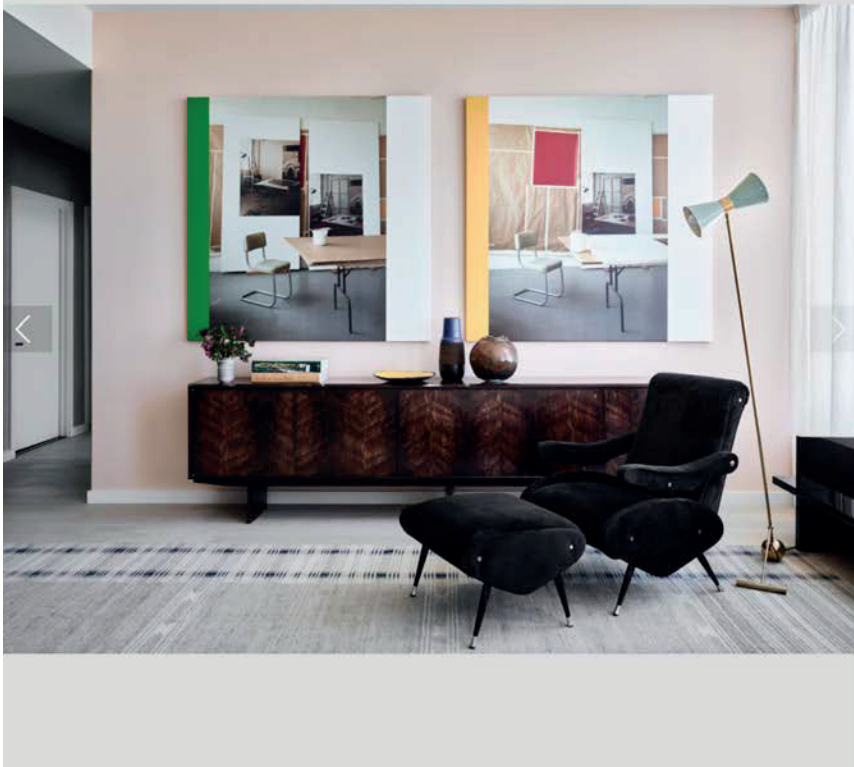


In the office, a mid-century sofa by Carlo Hauner and Martin Eisler and marble coffee table by Jorge Zalszupin are paired with a 1980s armchair by Leon Rosen for Pace Collection.



The dining room's 1980s Martin Szekely for Galerie Neotu chairs and mid-century Sergio Rodrigues jacaranda and marble table are reflected by Symbiosis, Davina Semo's 2019 acrylic mirror piece.

Back in the living room, a 1950s armchair and ottoman by Osvaldo Borsani sit beside a jacaranda sideboard by Joaquim Tenreiro from the same period.



Get the Fifteen Fifty Look



[Joaquim Tenreiro](#)



[Osvaldo Borsani](#)



[Angelo Lelli](#)



[Carlo Hauner &
Martin Eisler](#)



[Portego](#)