



AD

into
the vibe

model
PALOMA ELSESSER
at home
in Brooklyn

up next

a new generation of designers sets the mood

in the mood

AT A MANHATTAN LOFT BY DARREN JETT, SLIDING GLASS PARTITIONS SEPARATE THE LIVING AND SLEEPING AREAS, THE LATTER OF WHICH JETT OUTFITTED WITH A CUSTOM BED AND SIDE TABLES THAT HE INTEGRATED INTO THE CARPETING; PENDANTS BY INGO MAURER AND MIRROR BY ZIETA STUDIO.

Alluding to movies, music, and design marvels of the recent past, *Darren Jett* injects a classic Manhattan loft with some serious sex appeal

TEXT BY **SAM COCHRAN** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ANGELA HAU** STYLED BY **MARTIN BOURNE**



AN INGO MAURER PENDANT HANGS IN THE DINING AREA, WHERE VINTAGE PIERRE GUARICHE CHAIRS SURROUND A JAMES DE WULF TABLE.



JETT (RIGHT) WITH HIS CLIENT, CHRISTOPHER CHIOU, IN THE DINING AREA. LEFT THE KITCHEN COMPLEMENTS NERO MARQUINA MARBLE WITH STAINLESS-STEEL CABINETS AND SHELVING.

to

woo their clients, decorators regularly come equipped with fabric swatches, tile samples, and other tactile hints at rooms to come. Darren Jett goes for an even more full-sensory experience. As part of his presentations, the designer prepares a soundtrack that embodies not only the interiors he's envisioning but also the lifestyle he hopes unfolds there. In the case of the Manhattan loft that he recently renovated for finance executive Christopher Chiou, that playlist included disco hits, underground dance tracks, and George Michael classics—songs that capture urbane gay abandon. “Every project should feel like a movie,” Jett reflects. “This character felt close to my world. I knew his plot.”

Chiou bought the apartment, a classic SoHo artist's loft, in 2021, amid the city's pandemic real estate slump. At the time, he had been back on the East Coast for only a few years after 17 in San Francisco, where he rode the boom-and-bust

cycles of the tech industry. But New York quickly settled into home for the New Jersey native. And so, following stints renting in Chelsea and the West Village, he decided to lay proper roots, visiting a listing that had languished on the market. “Immediately it felt like something different,” he recalls of the open and untouched space, which had undergone only ad hoc renovations over the decades. “I saw the potential to do something special.”

Enter Jett, whose work Chiou had encountered through a mutual friend. The designer was then early into his practice, having struck out on his own in 2020 after cutting his teeth at the New York firms Ash and Rafael de Cárdenas. “I was excited to work with someone who was excited about the opportunity,” reflects Chiou. Never mind the project's modest scale—Jett delighted at the prospect of a gut renovation, his imagination spinning with romanticized visions of gritty 1970s downtown Manhattan.

Chiou's mandate was less of a mood board and more of a mood. “I wanted it to have a sexy vibe—chic and sophisticated,” he recalls. Say no more, thought Jett, “he had met his match.” Mind churning, the designer set to work assembling an array of

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LEFT THE BATHROOM VANITY IS CRAFTED FROM THE SAME MARBLE USED IN THE KITCHEN. BELOW THE SLEEPING AREA ADJOINS THE OPEN-CONCEPT CLOSET AND BATHROOM, WHICH IS DISTINGUISHED BY A SHOWER OF GLASS BLOCKS.



visual references, many of them cinematic (the 1986 erotic drama *9½ Weeks*, the 1978 horror film *Eyes of Laura Mars*) and fashion-related (Halston's town house). Folded into his collage-style presentations was a crash course in recent design history. Think: the carpeted built-ins of Bray-Schaible, the High-Tech innovations of Joe D'Urso, and the stainless-steel platforms of Gae Aulenti. "Darren was great about giving me options and knowing when to push me outside my comfort zone," reflects Chiou.

THE RESULTS INTERROGATE pearl-clutching assumptions of private and public realms, embracing voyeurism and exhibitionism as underlying tensions. "Imagine an apartment where your clothes fall off the moment you walk in," says Jett, who divided the floor plan into what he calls the shell and the core. The dining and living areas open onto the sleeping space in one fluid sweep, with sliding glass partitions as barriers. A carpeted plinth forms not only the base of sectional seating but also the single step up and down into the bedroom, where that same low pile extends wall-to-wall and up the bespoke bed and integrated side tables. Central to the whole scheme is the open-concept closet and bathroom, with a circular shower of glass bricks. "You're putting on a show," Jett jokes of the transparent but ultimately modesty-preserving blocks. "You should be able to tell if a person is there—or two people."

The materials palette blends industrial hallmarks with soigné interventions reminiscent of a bygone SoHo scene.

Walls of exposed brick and pressed-tin ceilings set the stage for maple millwork, Nero Marquina marble surfaces, and stainless-steel cabinetry. Rounded forms, meanwhile, offer their own language—from arched doors that riff on warehouse precedents to the folds of curtains that wrap the bedroom to the way motif on the custom coverlet, Jett's homage to kimono fabrics. Lighting too forms a kind of architectural language, with track fixtures, uplights, and Ingo Maurer icons casting a calm collective glow.

True to Jett and Chiou's shared sybaritic ambitions, the home comes alive in the nighttime. "It's dark in a way that speaks to me," Chiou notes. "The sun goes down and light comes through the windows, creating distinct shadows." Friends pop by for cocktails, fanning out on the built-in sectional, scattering across the carpeted floor, or lounging atop the bed. A projector can transform the whole space into a theater. "Being home is such a joy," he adds. "It feels quintessentially New York." Come bedtime—curtains drawn, door closed—he retreats to the sheets, cocooned in the carefully calibrated vibe. Turns out his comfort zone is broader than he thought. "I work in finance; part of my job is to be conservative," Chiou jokes. "This experience pushed me to embrace risk." ▀

ART: LUKASZ STOKŁOSA/AMITY GALLERY, NEW YORK



"Every project should feel like a movie. This character felt close to my world. I knew his plot." — *Darren Jett*

IN THE LIVING AREA, CARPETED PLATFORMS OUTFITTED WITH CUSTOM CUSHIONS FORM LOW-SLUNG SECTIONAL SEATING; CURTAINS OF KVADRAT FABRIC AND ARTWORKS BY ŁUKASZ STOKŁOSA.