

INTERIORS

ART IN
DESIGN





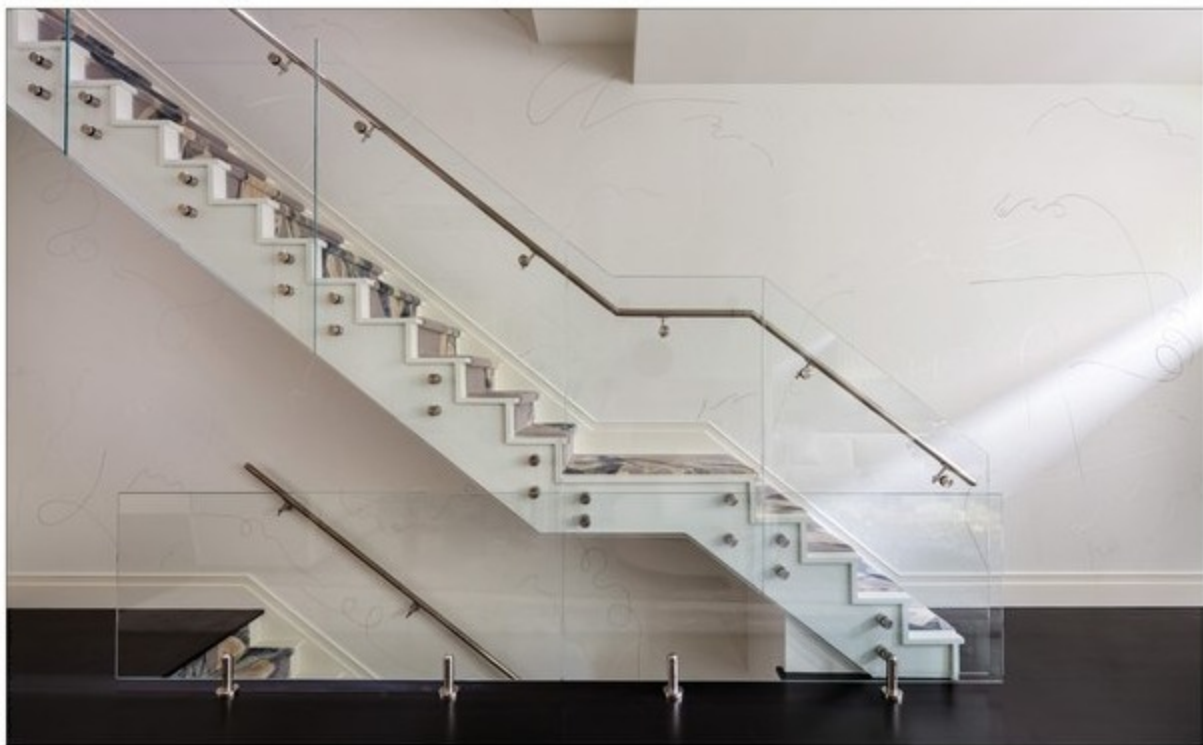
ONE OF A KIND

INTERIOR DESIGN: PENNY DRUE BAIRD

TEXT: ERIKA HEET

PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK SARGENT





A trusting client is a gift to a designer. For Penny Drue Baird, a couple with two children who were moving their lives to a townhouse on the Upper West Side of Manhattan possessed completely open hearts and minds for the redesign. “They were new to the design world, but they were very receptive to almost every kooky idea I had,” says Baird, whose design firm, Dessins, is based in New York. Those included a concept she came up with for the floor of the dining room, located just off the entry. Whereas one might expect a uniform floor treatment, Baird artfully transitioned a more traditional dark wood floor into a creamy white marble, in the form of seemingly randomized strips and pieces stretching into the kitchen beyond. Near the new, modern stair that spans and unifies this multi-floor space, she commissioned local artisans to add Twomblyesque squiggles of paint so that it reads like a huge modern canvas. Such ideas, says Baird, “make their house special and unique and give it whimsy and happiness.”

In the dining room, which doubles as the home’s entry hall, Baird added extra glamour with thin, round alabaster lights from Apparatus that hug the ceiling. “It wasn’t the best room to work with because of the low ceilings, so I didn’t want to use chandeliers or hanging lights, and I’m not a big high hat girl,” Baird notes. The configurable stone lights were the perfect solution, playing off the marble in the floor stripes, whose tones and shapes are referenced in the window sheers.

Upstairs, Baird further rarefied the space with her selection of two artful light boxes of slightly differing designs by John Wigmore, placed against the mirrored walls flanking the fireplace in the living room. Those mirrors reflect a pair of custom sectionals by A. Rudin covered in a fabric resembling a mosaic of thick white confetti from Kravet. A cast-bronze table from Holly Hunt offsets the room’s clear centerpiece: an Yves Klein Monogold table, its glass exterior housing a field of delicate gold leaf within. Underfoot, another of those “kooky” ideas: a rug by Sacco highlighted by a diagonal line that begins sliver thin, then widens as it reaches one corner.





As a designer, I don't repeat a lot of things," Baird says. Like the Klein piece, which found its place in this project, a chandelier by Gabriel Scott that resembles a chain of geometric textured glass molecules will live here and here only, as far as Baird's commissions are concerned. "I can't keep using it over and over," she says. "Once I've used it, it's out of my system." Good thing—it complements the Powell & Bonnell stools exquisitely, as well as the Roll & Hill sconces and custom banquette in the adjacent breakfast room, near which hangs the clients' beloved black-and-white portrait of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. "So many designers design for themselves, or what's in the magazines, or use the most showy things," Baird says. "For example, I love bouclé—when it came on the scene, I loved it, but now how can I give it to anyone?"

As the floors rise, a sense of relaxation and letting one's hair down sets in. "They entertain a lot, so we joked about having a bar on every floor," Baird says with a laugh. There's the club room, with a set of high-backed Poltrona Frau lounge chairs, a glass-topped metal coffee table found at the *marche aux puces*, and an Edward Fields carpet that evokes movement. "Here, we didn't choose any classic seating, like sofas," Baird says. "We wanted everybody in a lounge setting, with big club chairs on a rug, for a group of people talking and drinking and being together." The top-floor solarium is similarly welcoming and unabashedly cozy, with floor-to-ceiling glass walls with a door leading to a private terrace.

The ultimate chill room is the primary bedroom, where once again Baird eschewed typical approaches in favor of the unusual. "Often in primary bedrooms a TV is placed at the foot of the bed, but they wanted a gigantic TV on the wall, and they didn't care that the sofa was under it," she says. The wall-length sofa, from Bespoke by Luigi, has a bit of a curve to it, with soft tufting that plays off that of the custom headboard, covered in a Romo fabric. "This is a really floppy room where the kids can hang out, and the sofa always looks neat," Baird says. In this room, as throughout, a rich materiality and subtle layering is in full effect. "We don't use a lot of patterns, but we don't like a room of just solids, either—it's a balance to get that movement in the textures," Baird says. "It's not so deliberate—it's like the difference between making a cake from a recipe or just knowing how to make it." ■ Penny Drue Baird, [Dessins, dessinsllc.com](http://Dessins.dessinsllc.com)



