

# Escape to the City

In the West Village, a couple gets the festive, fabulous landing pad they had pined for.

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Interior Design: CeCe Barfield Thompson, CeCe Barfield, Inc. Home Builder: Nick Marseni, N-Marseni Contracting Inc.

**F**or Paula and Gerard Sansosti, owning a pied-à-terre in New York City was a dream years in the making. While raising their five children, the Pittsburgh-based couple tried to spend as much time as possible in Manhattan but, according to Paula, it never felt like enough. “We have always enjoyed visiting, but we spent less time there than we wanted to because of our schedules,” she says. With three of their grown children now living in the city and their youngest away at college, the time had finally come to put their long-term plan into motion. “What we wanted was a place of our own where we could enjoy the adventures that the city offers,” Paula adds. After an extensive search, the couple finally found their ideal home away from home in a two-bedroom condo in the West Village.

At first, Paula and Gerard planned only to paint the walls and change out the kitchen countertops before moving in. Soon, however, they came to see the apartment’s untapped potential and promptly called on designer CeCe Barfield Thompson, whose own refined Manhattan apartment Paula had seen and admired, to kick things up a notch. Like her clients, Barfield Thompson was thrilled at the prospect of a home that catered solely to adults. “The Sansostis were excited to do something grown-up, meaning that we could use really luxe, beautiful materials,” she notes. At the same time, the designer had to bring as much flexibility to the apartment as possible so that the couple could live there comfortably both while alone or when entertaining family and friends. “We focused on elegance and beauty, but were careful to make practical decisions, too,” Barfield Thompson says.

In the tradition of sophisticated New York City decorating, the designer outfitted the apartment so that it would reflect its cosmopolitan setting while also using space wisely. As she explains, “Asking a lot of a room is what makes it comfortable and inviting.” In the living area, a classic velvet sofa and upholstered chaise provide sumptuous perches for relaxing solo or with

guests, while a nearby pedestal table and corner banquette offer an elegant spot for working on one’s laptop or hosting a small dinner party. Because the room holds the couple’s beloved antiques, including a William and Mary olive wood cabinet that hides the television, Barfield Thompson introduced a crisp, contemporary plaster strié finish to the walls to prevent the space from feeling stuffy. “Coming up with a palette that sparks interesting conversations between texture and color is important for traditional spaces to feel fresh,” she posits.

Luxurious finishes also play a starring role in the galley kitchen, which Barfield Thompson and general contractor Nick Marseni transformed into a jewel-box workhorse with cased-oak cabinetry, dramatically veined Viola marble countertops and antiqued-mirror wall panels. Meanwhile, an adjoining nook that formerly served as a dining space was converted into a built-in bar that is suitable for staging a cocktail party spread for guests or eating in casually as a twosome.

Even those rooms intended as refuges from the city’s hustle and bustle are nonetheless influenced by their urban surroundings. “You want a space to feel connected to what’s beyond,” Barfield Thompson says. “In a suburban project, that is a garden, but in a New York City project, it is often the sky.” For the couple’s bedroom, that meant wrapping the space in an azure arboreal wallpaper, creating an effect which the designer compares to being in a bird’s nest above the West Village. On the other hand, in the nearby library, which does double duty as a guest room, the designer enveloped the petite space in a large-scale, chocolate-colored damask print. “It makes the room feel bigger and creates a sense of intimacy without appearing dark and heavy,” Barfield Thompson says.

While the Sansostis love to spend their time exploring the city, visiting museums and attending sporting events and concerts with their children, Paula is so pleased with her pied-à-terre that staying in often proves just as enticing. “I feel like I’m wrapped in the loveliest environment,” she notes. “And what’s really great about this apartment is that it feels like *us*.” ■



Pierre Frey’s Le Grand Genois Rayure fabric covers the living room banquette. Antiques include an Italian pedestal table, an early-18<sup>th</sup>-century English portrait purchased at Avery & Dash and a William and Mary cabinet that once belonged to fashion designer Bill Blass.

The living room walls sport a plaster strié finish by ArtGroove. A table from James Sansum rests between a sofa and chaise wearing Pierre Frey textiles. The coffee table is from Doyle and the chair was found via Antony Todd.





**Above:** Antiqued-mirror paneling and sconces by Chameleon Lighting help to illuminate the bar, where steel stools from Heather Ashton Design make a perfect dining nook. The framed linocut is by Matias Spescha.

**Opposite:** Designer CeCe Barfield Thompson selected a cerused-oak finish for the kitchen and bar cabinetry for a French midcentury vibe. The nickel cabinet pulls are from Elegance in Hardware & Bath. Calacatta Viola marble was used for the backsplash and countertops.





**Above:** The bedroom's geometric-patterned wool rug was designed by Barfield Thompson as a contemporary foil to more traditional furnishings. A 19<sup>th</sup>-century neoclassical bleached-mahogany bench, purchased on 1stdibs, is covered in blue mohair. The painting is by Jenny Lock.

**Opposite:** Gracie's hand-painted Hampton Garden wallpaper gives the primary bedroom the feel of an aerie. The custom chaise is upholstered in a Fortuny fabric. A Liz O'Brien Editions Lila chair is partnered with a black lacquered desk from The Antique and Artisan Gallery.