

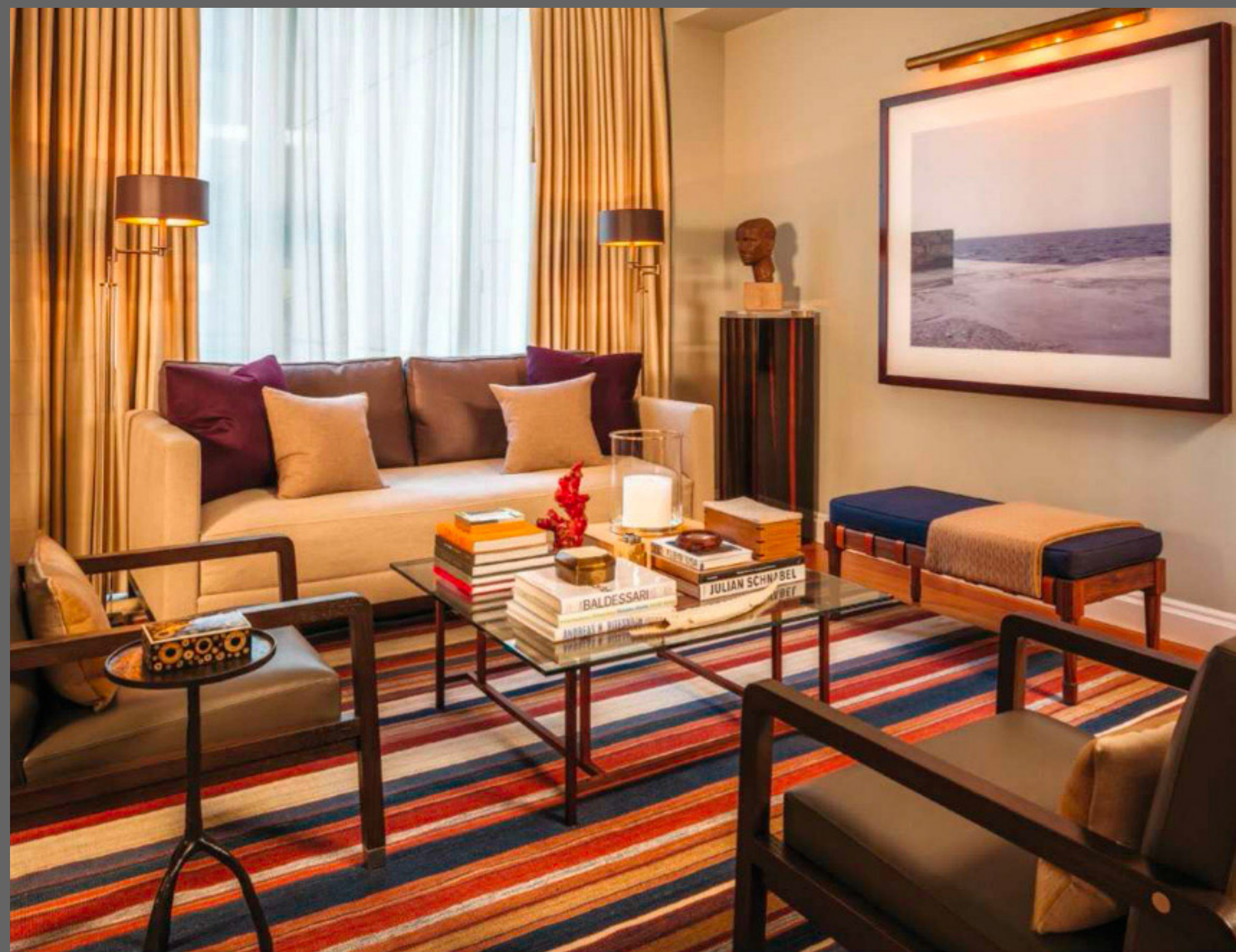
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OBJECT LESSONS

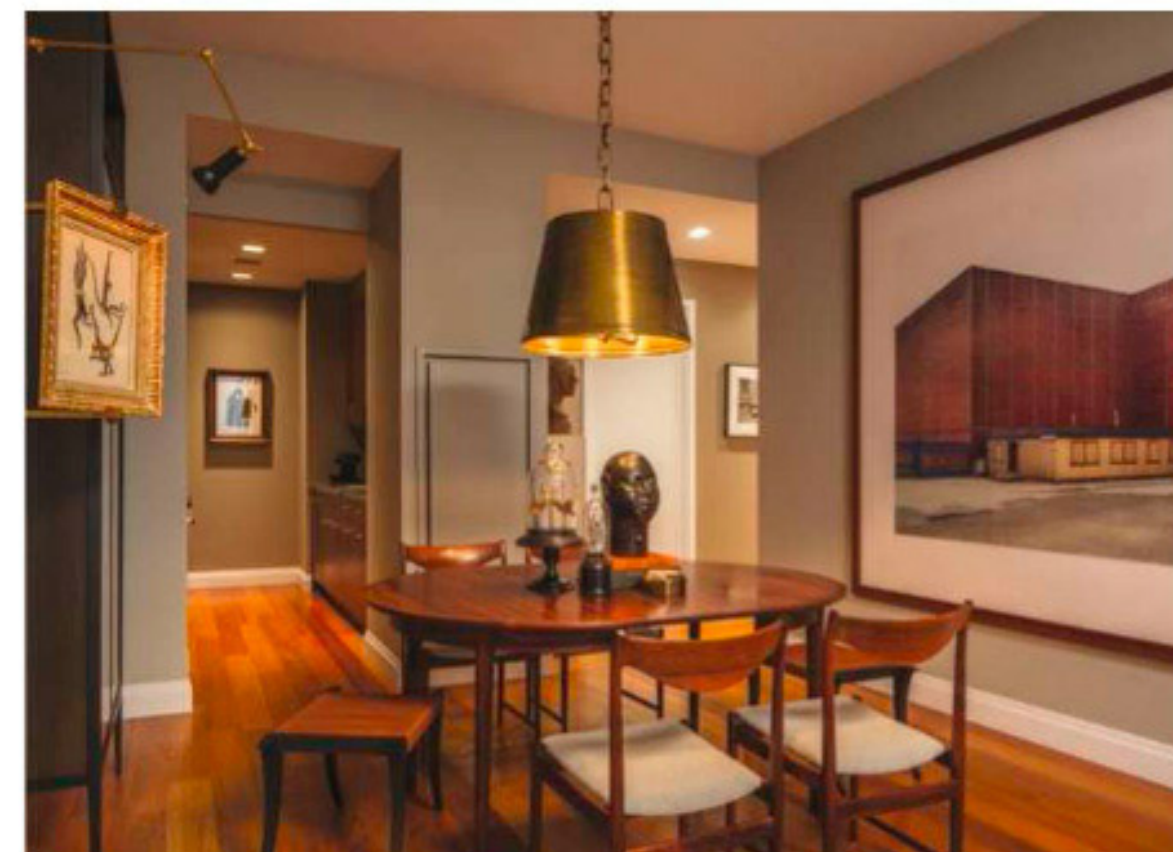
FOR A GLOBETROTTING COLLECTOR, ALBERTO VILLALOBOS AND MERCEDES DESIO CRAFT A LUXE PIED-À-TERRE IN MIDTOWN FILLED WITH FAVORITE THINGS

INTERIOR DESIGN **VILLALOBOS DESIO** • TEXT **JUDITH NASATIR** • PHOTOGRAPHY **MARCO RICCA**

THE SQUARE-PEG-ROUND-HOLE equation of limited space and almost-limitless possessions? That's a classic design poser. It's also a catalyst for a calculus of elegance, as this 1,200-square-foot Midtown pied-à-terre created by design partners Alberto Villalobos and Mercedes Desio for an international hunter-gatherer client makes apparent. The duo, who helm Etos, a chic home-style boutique, as well as their namesake, Manhattan-based design firm, clearly know from curation.

Taming the client's profusion of fascinating artifacts, art, and captivating objects—plus an ever-increasing library—initially took a back seat in the design process. The pair explain that the client purchased the apartment—one bedroom, with an alcove, in The Centurion, the I.M. Pei/Pei Partnership-designed condominium high rise—straight from the developer. Their first steps involved refining the interior shell with finer finishes, custom windows, doors, upholstered walls (wool in the study, linen in the master bedroom), and custom cabinetry in the dining area and master bedroom, among other upgrades.

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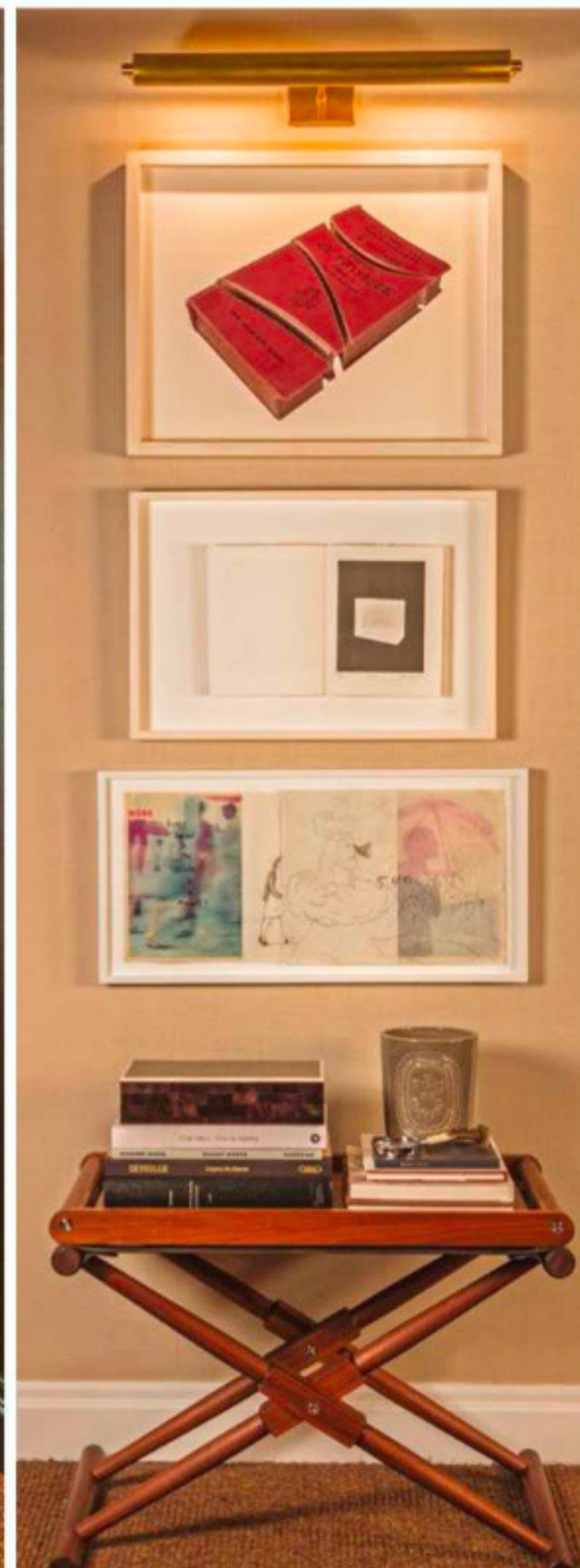


THROUGHOUT THE APARTMENT,
A NEUTRAL PALETTE PUTS
THE CLIENT'S COLLECTIONS IN FULL
VIEW—AND CENTER STAGE

THE RIGHT STUFF THIS PAGE: Adding focus to the hallway are a 1930s velum secretaire and stools from Flair Home. **OPPOSITE, TOP:** With seating by Christian Liaigre, Stéphane Olivier's hand-blown lamps, a 1950s Danish coffee table, and Richard Wrightman's bench, the living room is a well-edited mix. **OPPOSITE:** In the dining room, Luis Bustamante's chandelier crowns the client's 1960s Danish dining set. The African bronze head is from Etos.



CABINET MEETING THIS PAGE: A close-up view of the dining room's trove, with Hermès china housed with the client's curiosities in a Christian Liaigre cabinet. **OPPOSITE, NEAR RIGHT:** In the jewel-box of a study, large-scale furniture enhances the room's small proportions. **OPPOSITE, FAR RIGHT:** Among this apartment's many compelling tableaux is this quiet, but eye-catching moment of beauty in the master bedroom; linen wallpaper from Bart Halpern covers the walls; the custom picture light is from O'Lampia.



To obviate the potential for clutter that comes with the state of ever-increasing stuff, Villalobos and Desio relied on that most essential of design basics: smart space planning. The duo decided to appropriate the alcove area off the living room as a study/primary display for the client's finds and books. With dark custom cabinetry, custom window shutters, a Danish desk from the 1950s, a Serge Mouille table lamp, and taxidermy from the client's private collection, they transformed the room into a man cave of a particularly sophisticated kind.

That clever containment allowed them to institute clean, uncluttered, seriously stylish vistas in the open-plan living/dining area. There they went for the classic, modern mix—a well-edited

group of contemporary designs, such as Christian Liaigre's chairs and sofa, hand-blown floor lamps by Stéphane Olivier, and a 1950s Danish rosewood coffee table. That same spirit animates the dining area, which centers on the client's own Danish dining room set from the 1960s and a chandelier by Luis Bustamante. In the linen-lined master bedroom, Villalobos and Desio designed yet another cabinet to house more of the client's special trove.

Throughout the apartment, the pair used a neutral palette, which puts the client's collections in full view—and center stage. The net effect of all that craft and planning? An object lesson in design: a home away from home that feels truly like home, thanks to the objects, art, and artifacts that make it so. **SEE RESOURCES** ■