A ca. 1930s painting and simple graphic fabrics anchor the living room and keep it from looking too formal. Steven Gambrel designed the side chairs and club chair, but the armchair and rosewood and nickel cabinet are ‘40s French. The ca. 1930 Mercury glass lamps are from 30 Bond, NYC; the English yellow ceramic vase, from Rabun & Claiborne, NYC. The walls are Benjamin Moore’s color #309, and the drapes are Maracanda Silk by Osborne & Little. Castle Supreme wool carpet in Bamboo is from ABC Carpet & Home, NYC.
LEADS

WHEN STEVEN GAMBRIEL DESIGNED AN APARTMENT FOR A NEW YORK FAMILY, HE TOOK DESIGN CUES FROM THE FORMER OWNERS, COLLECTORS WHO LIVED EASILY WITH THEIR ART

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New Yorkers are, without question, residentially challenged. Some of them, though, refuse to compromise. It's not that they won't put down roots. They just can't bring themselves to settle for a place that's less than a home.

Michael Schultz, the CEO of Lulu Guinness, and his wife, Lisa, are like that. Dismayed by years of looking for a permanent residence for themselves, their two school-age daughters, and Sage, their yellow Labrador, these longtime New Yorkers had just about given up thoughts of finding that sweet somewhere. Then Lisa chanced upon an airy duplex, near the girls' school, with wonderful views, a park close by, and a certifiably notable past. "We always knew we could love a house," she says, "but we never thought we could love an apartment. This place immediately felt right, just like a home."

For the Schultzes, and for Steven Gambrel, the designer they commissioned to do the interior, the dwelling's past has been a prologue, in more ways than one. The four-bedroom apartment belonged previously to celebrated art lovers who owned a legendary collection of modern art—lots of Picassos, plus works by Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Frank Stella, and Eva Hesse. The Schultzes and Gambrel were inspired by the confident everydayness of the way the couple had lived with their art. Picasso's *Winter Landscape* took pride of place over the fireplace. Paintings covered the walls; collages and drawings dallied in the bathrooms. Flowers in vases and shelves overflowing with family photographs partially obscured many of the works.

"I loved that the apartment has this history," Lisa says. "And the more I learned about the previous owners, and how they lived with all those famous Picassos right next to tons of family photos, the more I began to appreciate the place and its past." As the Schultzes discussed with Gambrel what they found particularly appealing in their new apartment, they began to realize that the renovation they wanted called for few changes in the interior. The windows were enormous. The rooms flowed easily from one to another. The stairwell swept sexily up to a landing large enough for a baby grand piano. Part of the old servants' corridor could be converted easily to a guest wing. They found the original metal cabinets still hanging in the kitchen. And they wanted to keep the downstairs powder room as is, since it was still papered with the previous owners' pattern—and studded with the nails used to hang a series of drawings. "We didn't want to wipe the past away; we just wanted to adapt the place to the way we live," Lisa says. "Steven got that." The other thing that Gambrel "got" was that the Schultzes didn't want their home to feel or look too formal, as if it had been done by a decorator.

Gambrel found ways to address the Schultzes' needs without ripping out remaining elements...
A 1920s nude sets the tone for the orange room. Gambrel painted walls in Benjamin Moore’s Pumpkin Pie, and covered a slipper chair with pieces of 19th-century quilts. A vintage Billy Baldwin–designed carpet was an unexpected find.
of the interior's past. Discussing the function of each room led to some interesting choices. There is no formal dining room, for example, because when the Schultzes entertain, they tend toward the casual. "The former dining room," Gambrel says, "is now a library and sitting room with a dining table. A big tabletop converts to seat twelve." Bookcases line one wall; Gambrel designed two of them with deeper shelves to hold serving utensils.

"In lieu of tearing out the kitchen, we decided to embellish what we had," he says. That meant new appliances, new lower cabinets to match the existing upper ones, cork floors for that '40s feeling, brick-colored Formica for the countertops, and new tiles "in the vein of what was always here." Gambrel kept the breakfast room simple, building in a banquette to satisfy what he calls the Schultzes' "low-key, underdecorated aesthetic." Upstairs, he converted what had been dressing rooms into a small gym with its own bathroom.

Almost everything in the Schultzes' residence is new—except for their art and one or two pieces of furniture. No space is too formal or fancy to adapt to the family lifestyle. "Recently, we had thirty or so kids over for a party in the living room," Lisa says. "We moved everything fragile and served only white food and clear drinks so that nothing would stain. They had a wonderful time, and everything survived. It's a perfect balance."

The rooms are awash in contrasting textures and finishes, with a palette that moves between cool and warm. "Lisa gave me free reign," Gambrel says. "The colors react with the view of the water, but they are right for the place and the paintings." Most of the Schultzes' art dates from the 1930s and 1940s, as does the building. (Van Wart & Wein and

Clockwise from top left:
- 20th-century French paintings hang above a girl's bed and a ca. 1940 table.
- Benjamin Moore's #898 is on the walls. • The Schultz girls and their dog, in the kitchen, where vintage vinyl chairs and the room's original enameled cabinets share space with a laminate-covered table and counters. The walls have Bright White ceramic tiles from Ann Sacks, and Benjamin Moore's Mellow Yellow paint.
- The powder room is much as the previous owners left it, including the Clarence House Gothic Lily wallpaper.
Pleasant Pennington and Albert W. Lewis designed the historic, Depression-era structure. The interior's deepest hue, a hot, terracotta orange, is in the sitting room on the second floor. "The Pompeian walls worked with the space," Gambrel says. "The color we chose wasn't very different from the deep red that the last owners had used here."

When Gambrel first saw the apartment, shadows of paintings were on the walls. "We could tell exactly which painting had hung where," he says. Those memories influenced the way he arranged the Schultzes' collection. He installed a portrait gallery in the stairwell and filled the upstairs sitting room with nudes. "Lisa wanted something in the downstairs powder room to mimic the previous owners' grouping of Picassos," Gambrel says. "I was walking down the street in SoHo one day, and I found these collages of images from medical and history books."

"This apartment has changed the way we live," Lisa says. "It's a little bit of a suburban twist on city living." The Schultzes' daughters, apparently, have made their parents promise to keep the apartment—always. If that's not rising to the residential challenge, what is?

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