

DESIGN FOR THE WELL-LIVED LIFE

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HOUSE & GARDEN

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50 FOR THE FUTURE OF DESIGN



DECORATOR KELLY WEARSTLER AT HOME IN L.A.

INTERIOR DESIGN

STEVEN GAMBREL

THE NEW AMERICAN



The Greenwich Village apartment of Steven Gambrel is a miniature study in one man's style and sensibility. In just a few small rooms animated by jolts of vivid color, the debonair Virginia-born architect turned interior designer conveys his distinctively modern way with traditional and contemporary elements. Gambrel ranges so widely through various periods and styles that it's fair to describe his style as simply American. "It's all about living in the now instead of weighing myself down with nostalgia," he says. "I try to think about how we like to live today, and I use the environment as the starting point." >



TRADE SECRETS FURNISHINGS Gambrel, left, designed the living room sofa, covered in Robert Allen's Savoy cloth, and the ottoman, in Edelman's Cavallini hair on hide. **RUG** An original '60s David Hicks, from Beauvais Carpet, NYC. **ART PRINTS** by Franco-Belgian artist Charles Wardenier.

PRODUCED BY MAYER RUS PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL MUNDY
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For an insight into Gambrel's *raison d'être*, you don't have to look further than his professional roots. He studied architecture at the University of Virginia, where he went up against his contemporaries in rejecting what he saw as their inflexible modernism. After graduating, he worked as a draftsman for Cooper Robertson, then for legendary decorator Jeffrey Bilhuber, where the human touch in decorating persuaded him to make the switch. "Designing a sofa is the same as designing a building," he says. "It has proportion and scale—it's a puzzle."

To take the measure of Gambrel's talent you have to understand his use of color. "Choosing color is much less arbitrary than many people think," he says. "Colors are responsible for the way the space makes you feel." Gambrel draws from a broad palette of solid colors, but keeps patterns to a minimum. "The different colors I use create an evenness. It's a great way of creating a common thread." The common thread of color that Gambrel has used throughout his own apartment is the pale blue walls and earth-toned furnishings. He then mutes their impact with textured wooden elements.

Gambrel's one-bedroom apartment gives a kaleidoscopic sense of his passion for art, history, and material culture. Abstract mid-century sketches and

paintings line the walls, while his furniture is a mix of custom-made pieces, antiques, and vintage finds ennobled with new upholstery and finishes. "I love taking old things and translating them into a current environment," he says.

For Gambrel, decorating is all about the personality of the chooser. "Nothing should be chosen simply for its value," he says, "but for how the pieces relate to your own lifestyle." His advice for the layman? "When you ask yourself what your design philosophy is, make sure you give an honest answer." [srgambrel.com] □

In the living room, top, a '50s Maison Jansen table displays a collection of grand-tour intaglios.

■ **In the bedroom, right,** a 19th-century cockfighting chair, covered in an Old World Weavers horsehair, is pulled up to a '40s Jean-Charles Moreux desk. The lamp is '50s French. Above the desk is art by R. C. Rice, Sophy Regensburg, and Gary Bower. Walls painted in Benjamin Moore's Arctic Blue. ■ Gambrel re-covered a '20s Antwerp chair for his living room, opposite page, in apple green Edelman leather. Walls are in Janovic's Thunder Bay, with Oh Boy trim; fireplace in Benjamin Moore's high-gloss black oil-based paint.



GAMBREL EMPLOYS BRIGHT COLORS
AND UNEXPECTED MATERIALS
TO GIVE A CONTEMPORARY
SPIRIT TO CLASSIC FORMS

