

# HOUSE WARMING

A THOUGHTFUL LAYERING OF MATERIALS, FURNISHINGS AND ARTWORK TRANSFORMS A RAW LOFT SPACE INTO A WELCOMING HOME DESIGNED WITH FAMILY LIVING IN MIND.

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To make the loft space of a Manhattan apartment feel less vast, designer Linda Ruderman created two intimate sitting areas. In the great room (foreground), a pair of Avedon floor lamps from Holly Hunt flank a custom slope-arm sofa wearing Rogers & Goffigon fabric, while cerused-walnut club chairs from Studio Van den Akker tout a Holland & Sherry textile; the leather stools are from Biasi & Co., and the irregular-edge rug is Kyle Bunting. The bronze center table is from Jean de Merry.



A silk-and-wool rug from Rug Art delineates the second sitting area, the living room, where Ruderman designed both the sofa clad with Rogers & Goffigon fabric and the orange barrel chair upholstered in Dedar fabric. The Dennis Miller Associates club chairs are covered in Jane Churchill linen on the front and Holland & Sherry leather on the back, and the sculptural coffee table with a bronze-smoked-glass top is a Steven Haulenbeek design. The black-oak shelving, bronze floor lamp and pedestal drink table are all from Holly Hunt.

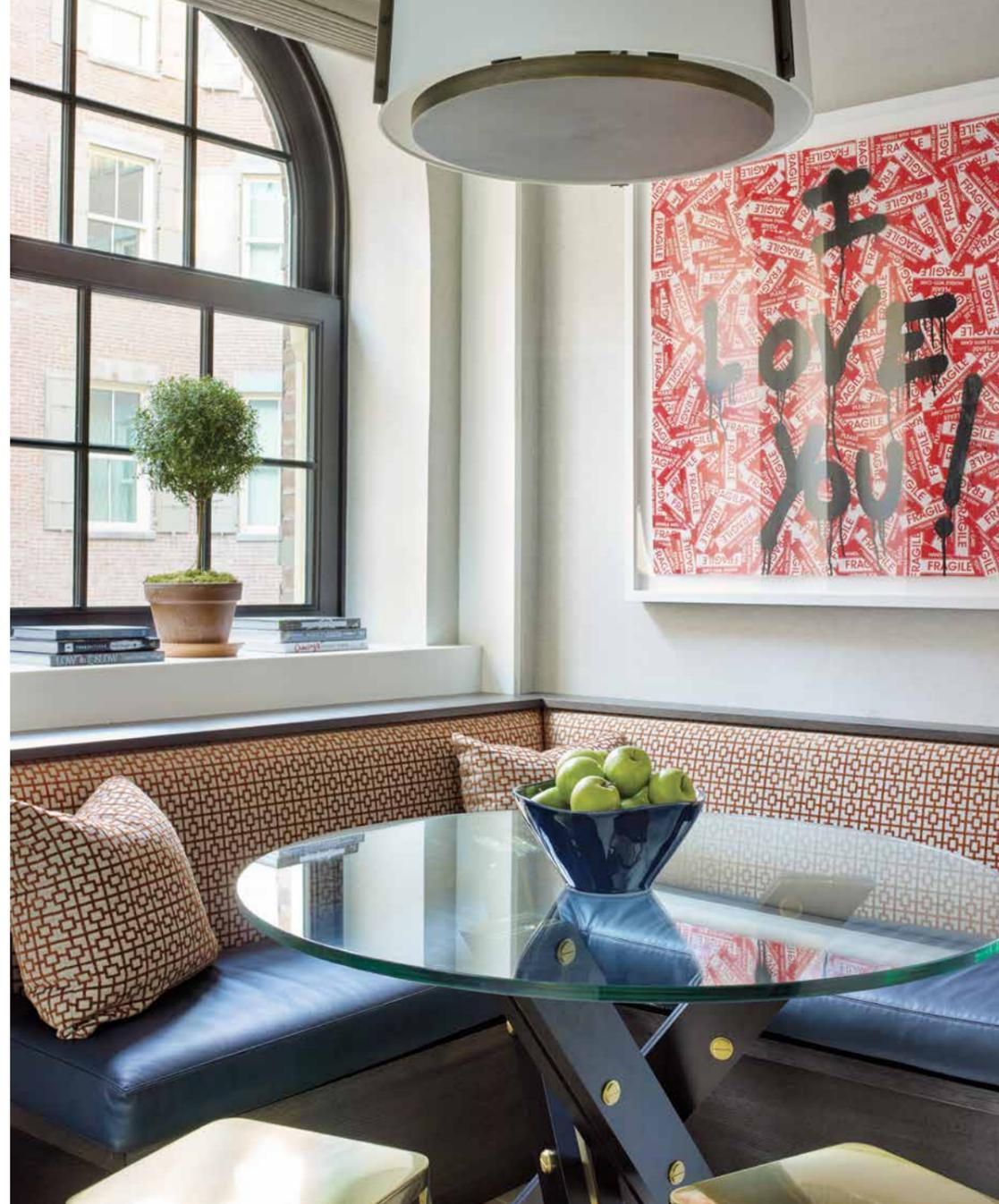
Say the word “loft” and thoughts of wide-open spaces defined by huge expanses of antiseptic white walls, oversize abstracts and sprinklings of leather and glass are likely to spring to mind. That is exactly what a young couple with a baby didn’t want for their Manhattan digs. “They didn’t want to walk into a minimalist space with sparse furnishings and just a few rugs,” says designer Linda Ruderman about her clients. “They wanted clearly designated rooms more in keeping with a traditional apartment. They wanted it to feel like a home.”

An old book bindery built in 1883 and renovated to accommodate 53 units served up the ideal backdrop for their future domicile: All the residences were imbued with existing exposed wood columns, high ceilings and new arched windows matched to their predecessors, as well as state-of-the-art Christopher Peacock kitchens and sleek bathrooms with marble accent walls. It was at this intersection of industrial and modern that Ruderman and architect Anthony Minichetti stepped in. “When I first saw the loft, it was a completely raw space with concrete decks above and below that were supported by remnants of solid rough-hewn beams with metal strappings that had to be salvaged and incorporated back into the design,” says Minichetti. “We liked the idea of maintaining the urban details of Charles Haight, the original architect, but filled in with our own contemporary, clean-line aesthetic.”

Ruderman initiated the overall design process by producing computerized depictions of how the space might look based on information gleaned during early meetings with her clients. The resulting images included veneered brick walls meant to reference the building’s lobby, a cream-colored sofa and plaid wing chairs with an air of Ralph Lauren about them. According to the designer, despite having

**Right:** Located next to the kitchen, the custom banquette by general contractor Frank Pompa features Spinneybeck navy leather on the seat and a vibrant textile on the back. Stools from CB2 provide additional seating, the glass-topped table is from RH, and the Jiun Ho light fixture is from Dennis Miller Associates. Mr. Brainwash's *I Love You* piece, created from stickers and spray paint on plywood, adds a splash of whimsy.

**Opposite:** Architect Anthony Minichetti carved out a formal dining area next to the living room. Here, a Paul Jenkins painting commands one end of the room, while a Phillip Jeffries canvas-linen wallcovering backs a bronze mirror from Hudson Furniture; Ruderman designed the cabinet fabricated by Daniel Scuderi Antiques. An Alison Berger chandelier hangs above the walnut table from Dennis Miller Associates, which is surrounded by Profiles chairs clad in Holland & Sherry leather and grounded by a silk-and-wool floor covering from Rug Art.



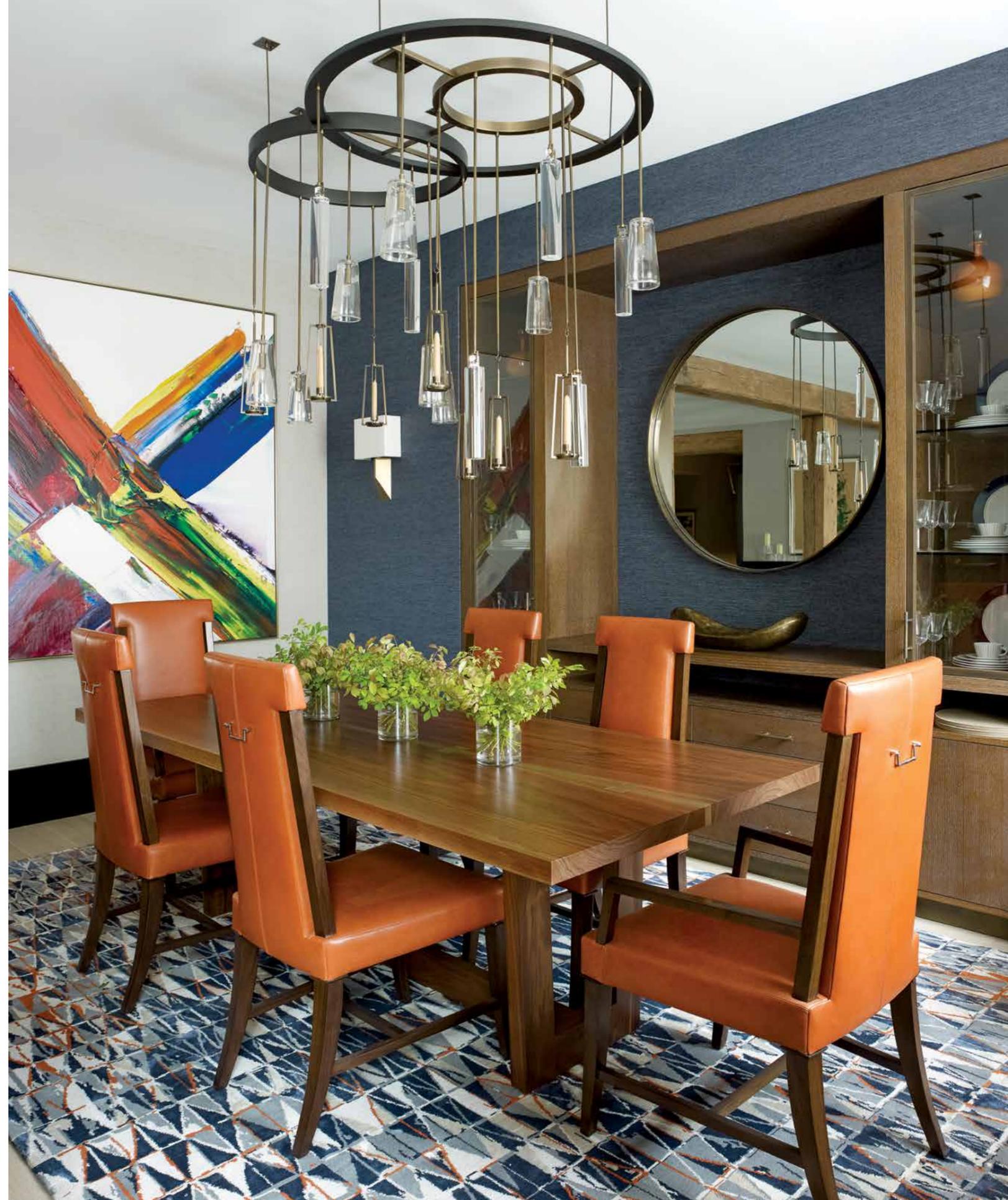
honored their requests, the wife took one look and said no. "It was too masculine and there wasn't enough color," recalls Ruderman, who promptly went back to the rendering screen.

It was during the second go-round that the wife's love of navy blue and her affection for orange—the Hermès version—emerged, and it was also then that the rooms defined by textured deep navy wallpaper and peppered with bold strokes of orange hit the mark. "This time they both exclaimed, 'that's it!' They even loved the rendering's Frank Stella piece for the great room and the Paul Jenkins painting for the dining room," the designer says.

With the furnishings and color scheme approved, it was time to turn renderings into reality, starting in the entry, where the elevator doors open to reveal plank wood flooring and ebonized-wood doors that lead to the foyer and great room.

"The wood is meant to complement and not compete with the bleached oak of the structural timbers," says Minichetti, who relied on general contractor Frank Pompa to get the details just right. Another complementing component found throughout is metal. "With the rustic beams, you need elements of industrial chic, and there is a bronze theme running through the entire apartment," says Ruderman, noting she selected materials that would harmonize with the bronze hardware that already accompanied the original kitchen and bath designs. In the foyer, for example, a circular glass table with a solid-bronze base punctuates that point while establishing a place to pause and take in what lies beyond.

As for color, the orange moments begin with leather stools in the seating area of the great room, followed by tangerine barrel chairs and sofa throw pillows in the living



Exposed wood beams frame the open-concept kitchen outfitted with custom dark-stained white-oak cabinetry by Christopher Peacock, Calacatta marble countertops, a six-burner Wolf range and antiqued-bronze hardware. The cerused-walnut barstools from Studio Van den Akker are upholstered in Spinneybeck faux leather.

room beyond. The leather dining room chairs add another dramatic splash of the hue. “You need the strong pop of color to draw your eye past the beams and into the rooms beyond,” the designer explains.

Ever mindful of her clients’ desire for “designated spaces that need to be named,” Ruderman introduced custom floor coverings like an irregular-edge hide version in the great room and similarly patterned rugs in the living and dining rooms to mark their respective territories. “The size and variety of the carpets help establish the idea of separate spaces,” she adds.

Along with the mixture of textured linens and velvets that layer on the warmth and reinforce the idea of home, a variety of curved elements like the swoop of the sofa, the rounded profile of the barrel chairs and the implied movement of the metal circles on the Alison Berger dining room chandelier further soften the surroundings. “I love how sculptural elements add interest and personality to a room,” says Ruderman, who at the husband’s request designed a custom blue-lacquered DJ console for the great room, which further upped the personality quotient. “He had very sophisticated equipment, and he wanted to incorporate a piece of furniture in that room so he could use it when entertaining.”

When the party ends, however, the couple can escape to the sanctuary of the master suite, where a soothing upholstered headboard, a carpet reminiscent of clouds and an intentional lack of a television create a space that is all about decompression. “The silk wallcovering combined with the cream and pale blue hues makes this their personal chill zone,” says the designer about the perfect denouement. And while the vibe indeed changes in the master suite, what remains is the thoughtful layering and attention to detail that makes a house—or in this case a loft—a home. ■



Ruderman designed the master suite's paneled headboard and upholstered it in a Colefax and Fowler material that infuses the space with a soft, textural element. Antique-brass-and-frosted-rock-crystal pendants from Dennis Miller Associates are paired with faux-shagreen-wrapped nightstands that were also custom pieces by the designer. A bench from A. Rudin wears faux fur by Weitzner.



Each of the units in the renovated historic building came with beautifully appointed bathrooms. Among the amenities in this one are the stand-alone tub backed by a dark marble panel and a custom vanity.