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Modern By Design



photo finish

In just four months, interior designer and veteran set decorator Valerie Pasquino turned a sprawling Manhattan loft into this comfortable home for a modern family.





Steel-framed glass doors separate Sue Hostetler's light-filled office from the dining area. Works from her extensive and highly personal photography collection hang above an art deco daybed with built-in drawers. Opposite, Designer Valerie Pasquiou, with Hostetler at left, sits on a 1940s daybed by famed French designer Jean Prouvé that she reupholstered in white Ultrasuede. The Tibetan carpet is silk; the acacia-wood *Pouf* side table/stool is by Tucker Robbins.





Sue Hostetler never wanted to move to SoHo, much less to live in one of the industrial-chic, cast-iron loft buildings that give the downtown Manhattan neighborhood its landmark look. The writer and photo editor—and author of the books *Oceans* and *Hip Hollywood Homes*—had been happily ensconced with her husband, Jon Diamond, a bicoastal media CEO and entrepreneur, and their young daughter in a West Village flat overlooking the Hudson. They had their heart set on buying a house on one of that neighborhood's tree-lined streets. In fact, they looked at nothing but townhouses during almost three years of hunting.

On a lark, the couple went to see a loft in the heart of SoHo. The apartment had already been renovated and its wide-open interior at least partially divided into distinct rooms, some with tall glass doors or perforated screens to maintain the flow of light and space. Hostetler and her husband liked the 14-foot ceilings and the towering windows overlooking the treetops. The next thing they knew, they'd bought the sprawling, 3,000-square-foot apartment.

While producing *Hip Hollywood Homes*, Hostetler got to know designer Valerie Pasquiou, whose home for film producer Mary Parent appeared in the book. The two hit it off immediately. Just as Hostetler was getting ready to move into her new loft, Pasquiou was busy relocating from Los Angeles to New York. The timing was perfect: Hostetler hired Pasquiou to freshen up the loft's interior and tailor it to the family. "People imagine lofts are always cold," says the French-born Pasquiou. "The challenge is how to warm up such a vast space without cluttering it and keeping a modern sensibility."

The loft's open living/dining room has 14-foot-high ceilings (with their original pressed tin) and refinished wood floors. Behind the 1940s sofa, found at a Paris flea market, a wall of painted perforated-metal panels screen the kitchen from view. Twin armchairs, cheekily covered in shades of Hostetler's favorite color, were inspired by French art deco pieces. The hand-carved walnut tripod lamp is by BDDW.

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What's Modern Now

- "I'm definitely trying to be more green. I think it's our responsibility as designers," says Valerie Pasquiou. "Three or four years ago you'd have to compromise on quality and pay more; now green products are comparable." This includes everything from the materials used to the means of production. Are the textiles natural? Can the plastics be recycled?
- Mixing furniture periods is the mode of the day. That includes surprises with upholstery: Putting retro patterns on contemporary pieces and very modern fabrics on vintage furniture and antiques seems fresh to the eye and enlivens rooms. Pattern is in.
- Think about space: Shelves don't have to be full; every wall does not need art. Complement groupings with single statements; augment balance with asymmetry.
- Play subtle geometry against the strongly linear traditional lines of modernism. In the master bedroom, for example, a grid motif carries from the checkered wood closet doors to the rug, the lines of the bedside tables and even the duvet cover.



Hostetler was clear about what she and her husband had in mind for their unexpected new surroundings. They wanted to create a place where their daughter and her playmates would feel as at home as their own frequent dinner guests. "We wanted something that wasn't fussy but still had style," recalls Hostetler. "We wanted it to be comfortable and relaxed but elegant."

That spirit fit in perfectly with the laid-back glamour Pasquiou creates for celebrity clients like Lisa Kudrow, Sharon Stone and kd lang (*MH*, March/April '01). "I like that her interiors are very clean. They don't feel overly 'done,'" says Hostetler. That's exactly Pasquiou's intent: "I'm anti-showroom look. Having a mix of things gives a home more personality," says Pasquiou. "In Europe, you keep your family antiques and mix them up with contemporary pieces. That's where you can push the edge."

Vintage pieces from the owners' previous home became a starting point for Pasquiou's design. They weren't centuries-old family heirlooms, rather a mix of 1930s art deco pieces from the Paris flea markets, a knockout 1940s Jean Prouvé daybed bought at auction and a flashy but tasteful Paul Evans mirrored dining table. But the 1940s French sofa in the living room went from yellow to white, and a classic Eames lounge chair in Diamond's study changed from black to white leather. Hostetler started off wanting to do everything white, but Pasquiou had other ideas. "I wanted a little more edge, to give things a twist," says the designer.

The dining table, which came from the clients' previous home, is a 1970s Cityscape piece by Paul Evans. The surface is covered in a patchwork of mirror-polished chrome. The sheer scale of the apartment means that furniture can be large without overwhelming the space. The mirrored table and transparent chairs reflect light, minimize their apparent bulk and allow for an unimpeded visual flow.







Pasquiou managed to give her clients' favorite pieces new life by pairing them with updated items. The dining table came with the owners from their previous home, but Pasquiou completely transformed it by switching out the homeowners' heavy mohair-upholstered chairs and replacing them with a dozen Z-shaped Lucite *Flou* chairs she bought at Twentieth, the chic Los Angeles design store.

"The dining area is slightly narrow, so I didn't want big, bulky chairs. I wanted to keep the transparency of the space," says Pasquiou, referring to the clear vista you get when stepping off the elevator and looking through the dining area to Hostetler's study beyond. Window treatments diffuse light but do not limit its flow.

Not having to spend too much time fixing the bones of the apartment allowed Pasquiou to delve into some custom pieces. The coffee table she designed for the living room is a hefty slab of wood on a raw steel base. She found the richly grained American walnut in the barn of a Pennsylvania furniture maker. She had the piece split, oiled and book-matched and set on steel legs.

Even with such custom detailing, the apartment took just four months to furnish. No doubt Pasquiou's training in fast-paced set design paid off. So did having supportive clients like Hostetler and her husband. "They were real troopers," says Pasquiou. "Design is such an intimate relationship. If there's no chemistry, it's no good." ☞ *See Resources, last pages.*

Left (from top): Existing metal vanities and steel-framed doors give the master bathroom an industrial look; in the master bedroom, a wall of checkerboard wood conceals Hostetler's closet (the doorway leads to her husband's dressing area and master bath). Right: Matching Dunbar lacquer nightstands, pendant lights by Patrick Naggar and runners from the Rug Company frame the bed. The photograph is by Simon Chaput.



Since the loft did not require structural renovation, only a quick paint job and floor refinishing, Pasquiou got right to work on the furnishings. (She did the project as a joint venture between Spacesmith, the Manhattan architecture, planning and interior design firm she joined as principal earlier this year, and her own practice, with offices in New York, Los Angeles and Paris.) Pasquiou breathed new life into some of the family's existing pieces by reupholstering them, including a Christian Liaigre ottoman in Hostetler's office, which Pasquiou covered in a lively floral pattern. "The flowers give it a sexy, feminine touch," says the designer.

As befits a trustee of the International Center of Photography, Hostetler is a longtime photo collector. Her personal collection, displayed throughout the loft, runs the gamut from classic black-and-white prints from the 1800s to edgy, contemporary conceptual work. "It's all things I like," she says. Pasquiou's interior design cap-

tures a similar variety of eras and styles. Besides the vintage French furniture, there are midcentury nightstands by the American design house Dunbar, Scandinavian ceramic lamps from the '60s, contemporary pieces by the likes of latter-day Parisians Christian Liaigre and Catherine Memmi and a stunning bronze table from the exquisitely edited L.A. design shop Blackman Cruz.

"I love that Valerie drew on so many different periods," says Hostetler, who was born and raised in Kansas. "We love the '60s, but our favorite era is art deco from the '30s." Pasquiou helped bridge the decades with flashes of '60s color and such post-deco fabric choices as the faux-cowhide print on two vintage armchairs.

Movable walls and doors of perforated metal veil the view of the living/dining room (left) from the kitchen (right), where Pasquiou added colorful Kartell stools by Philippe Starck. Opposite: Plexiglas shelves define an unobtrusive "open study" in a corner of the living area. A canvas by Ross Neher hangs above a Lucite console and a pair of custom ottomans. The marble-topped bronze table is from Blackman Cruz.

