

A DESIGNER WITH AN ART HABIT



A mid-1980's work by Kiki Smith and a figure sketch by Willem de Kooning installed asymmetrically creates a more relaxed setting at a classical fire surround, along with other works of paper in this New York City living room.

There are architects. There are interior designers. There are art collectors. Then, there is someone who is all three. Glenn Gissler has conquered each of these worlds with ease, honing a keen understanding of artistic context and inspiration that has been vital to his success.



Over a long cabinet in a Foyer, a cluster of drawings are installed casually: from the left: Jonathan Borofsky, Gordon Matta-Clark, Merit Cohen, Robert Smithson

"I have always 'collected' stuff," Gissler remarks. "Initially it was architectural artifacts, interesting and beautiful remnants of old buildings." Gissler's interest started young—when he was only 13—but even then he was aware of his desire to be an interior designer. The Rhode Island School of Design seemed like the natural home for a diverse and creative thinker like Gissler. Upon graduating with a degree in Fine Art and Architecture, however, his declaration as a 13 year old growing up in Milwaukee rang true: he intended to pursue interior design all along.



A small Stuart Arrends minimal painting hangs above a Paolo Buffa chair in the foyer while a Martin Ramirez hangs over the sofa in the living room.

"I would really say that Architecture and Interior Design are intertwined for me. I strive to create the most pleasing sequence of spaces, and architectural details, and to select the best possible furniture that my clients can or are willing to afford," he says.



A very large 19th century painting of stormy seas in its original frame hangs in this dining room in Eastern Long Island with a view of the Atlantic Ocean.

Though Gissler's design approach leans toward minimalism, he points out that "understanding context is extremely important as a key element of any project." The work he has done for a diverse array of clients, from the residence for a CEO to Caroline Hirsch of Caroline's Comedy Club, show his investment in a space. These are not just *places*, they are homes in which Gissler aims to "create a context for the future to take place."



The large Milton Avery painting brings a fresh abstraction to this traditional living room in New York City.

"I try to understand the nuance of a particular landscape that includes architecture, social landscape, history, etc.," he explains. More importantly, perhaps, he considers "who the clients are," taking into account personal histories, travel and culture.



A painting by Joan Mitchell hangs over an 18th century French limestone fireplace surround in this New York City apartment.

Art, then, is not an accessory to a space, it's truly intertwined with its ambiance and Gissler is the expert in creating such an experience. "Art for me is the ultimate luxury, and probably the single most memorable and defining aspect of a home," he notes. Nor does the art need to be expensive. Gissler often gravitates to drawings, another testament to his faith in meaning and the relationship between objects in a room rather than their price.



A 1926 cubist pastel by Jacques Lipchitz shares the wood paneled wall with a 1965 drawing by Roy Lichtenstein and a work on paper by Franz Kline from the 1950s. On the coffee table a bronze ostrich sculpture by Giacometti holds an ostrich egg.

Architect, interior designer, art-collector: Gissler's background provides him with the framework with which to discern a project's true essence. "Things can have meaning, and the relationship between things creates a dialogue," he says, adding "While I think about these things in depth I believe that people are effected by their environments and the things that are in it on a conscious, and deeply subconscious, level that define their experience."



A bronze sculpture by Max Ernst sits on the sideboard facing off with a large bold painting by Ross Bleckner

Travel north through New York City—where much of Gissler's work has been featured in glossy spreads in various publications—to Gissler's alma mater and you seen his talents as a curator truly on display. Gissler describes his experience as curating for the RISD Museum as "one of the most satisfying things that I do." His taste has enriched the

museum as well, adding pieces reminiscent of 20th century design, including, for the first time in the museum's existence, plastic.



From left to right: a 1950s drawing by Sonia Gechtoff and works on paper by Susan Rothenberg, Gary Gissler and Leon Golub look striking on this dark brown wall.

“My theory is ‘why wait until the incredible mass produced designs become expensive – buy them now,’ he says. “And I have, and have been boxing them up and sending care packages.” Gissler’s concern for balance—for the personal feel of a space—can be attributed as much to his expertise as to his intrinsic concern for creating a home for his client and its artwork. “I describe my approach as trying to achieve spaces that are ‘half full, and half empty,’” he explains. “That is to say that there is enough to delight the eye, but there are also places for the eye and mind to rest.”

- Written by Molly Hess

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