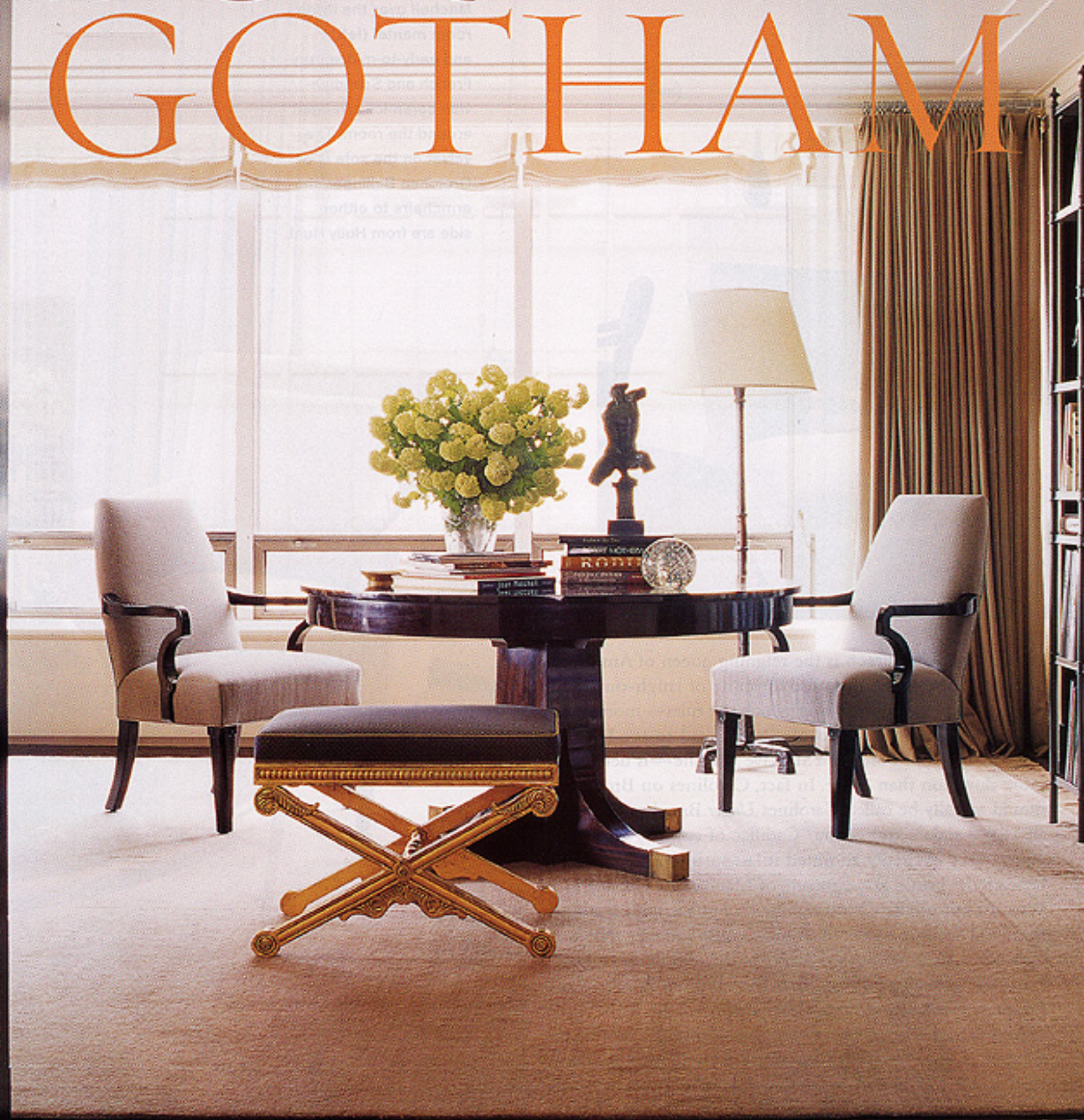




She may seek out new talent when it comes to comedy, but at home, Caroline Hirsch (left, in the foyer) gets serious about art and antiques. Interior designer Glenn Gissler helped her build a collection and the apartment in which to house it. In the living room (opposite), a bronze torso by Enzo Plazzotta tops an American mahogany center table. Styled by Peter Frank. For shopping information, see page 216.

PURE GOTHAM

Caroline Hirsch's sky-bound
New York City duplex
overlooks, well, everything.



By Charles Gandee
Photographs by William Abranowicz



An avid buyer of 20th-century art and design, Hirsch lives with a 1955 painting by Joan Mitchell over the living-room mantel (left) and early-to-midcentury French and Scandinavian ceramics arranged around the room. The velvet on the sofa is by Gretchen Bellinger, the armchairs to either side are from Holly Hunt.

Though Caroline Hirsch is the reigning queen of American comedy clubs, the undisputed doyenne of laugh-out-loud delight, the physical realm over which she rules—more often than not dressed in head-to-toe Prada, head-to-toe Dior or head-to-toe Tom Ford for YSL Rive Gauche—is decidedly more dungeon than castle. In fact, Carolines on Broadway should actually be called Carolines *Under* Broadway, because all 11,000 square feet of the “Cadillac of comedy clubs” (as *Variety* very excitedly anointed it last spring) are burrowed beneath the brittle gray concrete of Manhattan’s Great White Way. It’s not unlike a bunker, albeit a bunker with a jaunty theatrical decor that references such iconic comedic motifs as harlequins, pantomime and jokers in the service of an idiosyncratic school of design that the club’s architect, Paul Haigh, enjoys labeling “neomedievalism.”

And though Hirsch never complains about the inordinate amount of time she spends squirreled away there, it is telling that, at the end of each workday, when she leaves her subterranean lair in Times Square, she heads, like some fading phototropic plant, directly for the light.

In other words, it’s probably no accident that Hirsch’s Mercedes is a convertible. Just as it’s probably no accident







that the Shingle-style weekend retreat she and her partner, Andrew Fox, a lawyer, built in the Hamptons a few years back has conspicuously overscale windows and a luminous master bedroom located on the third floor of the 9,000-square-foot house perched, no surprise, atop the tallest dune on a site overlooking both Mecox Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

And then there's Hirsch's new Manhattan apartment, which is situated nine neat blocks due east of her club. The leisurely crosstown stroll takes about twenty minutes, door to door, factoring in the time necessary for the elevator in the thirty-eight-story building to rocket thirty-five floors straight up to a 4,000-square-foot duplex with views that would make Icarus swoon.

The apartment is in one of the two monumental towers that architect Wallace Harrison completed in 1966 on a plot wedged between the brave-new-world grandeur of the United Nations complex and the old-world gentility of

Beckman Place. Hirsch had already spent some seventeen years in a duplex in the west building before she, Fox and Emma, the duo's bearded collie, moved to a slightly larger one in the east. "I was going to redecorate my old apartment, and then this came on the market, and I wanted a little more space," says Hirsch, who confesses that, in addition to the two extra rooms, she wanted to make a fresh stylistic start. So she managed to convince herself that, as she says, "Maybe it would be easier to buy this apartment than to redo the one I was in."

Encouraging Hirsch to make the leap from west tower to east was Glenn Gissler, the Rhode Island School of Design-trained, Manhattan-based designer who had worked with her on her Hamptons house. She initially asked him to consider redesigning her duplex, but he demurred. And understandably so: the apartment was head-to-toe Art Deco. Think Ruhlmann, Dunand, Leleu. Think Mr. Chow's on East Fifty-seventh Street.

"I said, 'Just sell it and move. It would be easier,'" Gissler recalls advising Hirsch. Which she happily did, never mind that the matter of "easier" didn't quite ring true in the end.

As for why she didn't consider trying another location in Manhattan, say, Park or Fifth avenues, she reports, "It's hard to leave this kind of light. It's very, very different. And the views..."

Virtually untouched since the 1960s, Hirsch's second apartment was a kind of time capsule of the period in which it was built—complete with lime-green shag carpeting in the service hall, a graphic (and glossy) black-and-white palette and one of those open-tread cantilevered staircases that were considered glamorous back in the days when Truman Capote and Johnny and Joanna Carson called the

No one, not even Emma the bearded collie (above), can resist the kitchen's sparkling view of the United Nations. In the dining room (opposite), 1930s Jules Leleu chairs circle a table custom-designed by Gissler. The French forties bronze chandelier complements a Max Ernst figure of the same material; the painting is Ross Bleckner's 2001 *Flow and Return*.





A curving bronze torso by Auguste Rodin (opposite) echoes the serpentine staircase in the foyer. In the den (this page), Gissler paneled the walls in oak and chose neutral Clarence House sofa fabric to resonate with works by Lipchitz, Kline and Giacometti.





CAROLINE HIRSCH'S NEW YORK

Not only does she have a sixth sense when it comes to spotting comedic talent, but Caroline Hirsch also has a keen eye for life's luxuries. She can always find an unusual cashmere throw or a shagreen-covered tray at **TAKASHIMAYA** (693 Fifth Avenue); she deems the bath towels at **PRATESI** (829 Madison Avenue) the finest she's touched. **WATERWORKS** (225 East 57th Street) keeps Hirsch and her houseguests supplied with lovely bath products, and **BILL KOCIS IMPORTANT FLOWERS** (155 Prince Street) is her shop of choice for unusual arrangements to complement her decor. To frame her collection of modern paintings and drawings properly, Hirsch depends on **BARK FRAMEWORKS** (270 Lafayette Street). Finally, her love of art is matched by a passion for her pup, Emma, who likes to be washed and groomed at **REME'S OGGI PETS** (989 First Avenue).

buildings home. (Today the residents include Walter Cronkite, Dina Merrill and photographer Gordon Parks.)

Though the two Harrison towers rising over the East River have been likened to 860-880 Lake Shore Drive, Chicago's twin residential buildings designed by Mies van der Rohe and completed in 1951, they have neither an unimpeachable provenance nor anything approaching the same rigorous commitment to International Style modernism. This is partly because they were originally conceived

as office blocks; when the commercial-real-estate market faltered during their construction, the developers decided to reconfigure them as apartments and chose to go with the eminently bankable Park Avenue mold. "The walls are of glass, but the space is not modern," says Gissler. "It's carved up into more traditional rooms."

In other words, the apartment's aluminum-and-glass curtain wall said one thing, while its floor plan—public rooms and kitchen on the first level, four bedrooms on the second—said something else altogether. Which was fine with Hirsch and Gissler, although the absence of any semblance of texture or ornamentation or material richness was not. So they added them.

"It was really like a blank canvas," recalls Hirsch. "White walls, no moldings."

"It was a lot of work," Gissler reports.

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A few of her favorite things: Hirsch with companion Andrew Fox in the living room (top); a 1967 de Kooning drawing in an upstairs hall (left); and the biscuit-colored master bedroom (opposite). Upholstery fabric on the sofa, chair and ottoman is by Brunschwig & Fils; curtain fabric by Rogers & Goffigon; bed linens are by Frette.

