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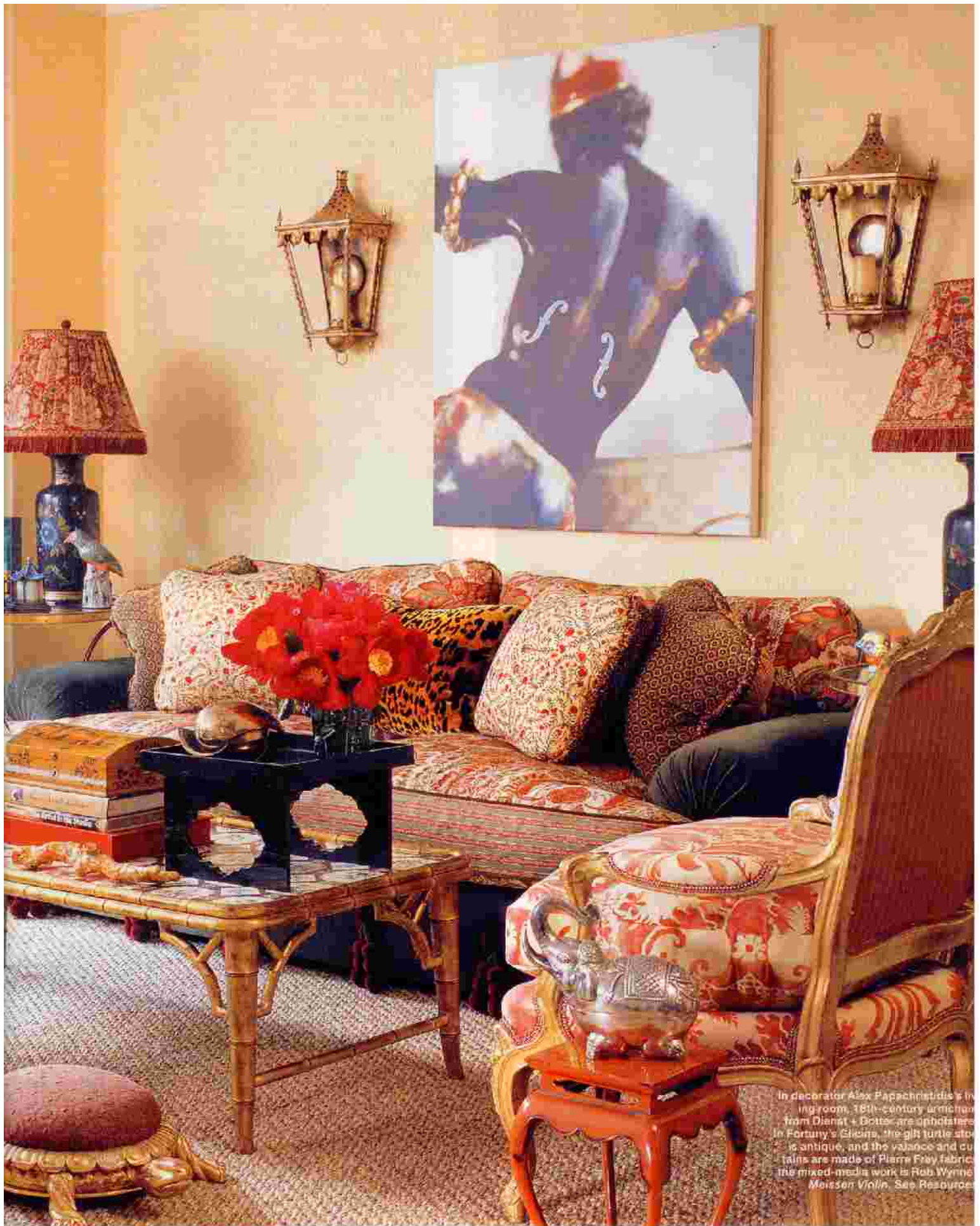
ALEX PAPACHRISTIDIS
HAS PACKED HIS MANHATTAN APARTMENT
WITH GLITTERING GILT,
SUMPTUOUS REDS, AND A SAFARI'S
WORTH OF EXOTIC BEASTS

*Text by Kristina Stewart Ward · Photography by Roger Davies
Produced by Anita Sarsidi*

When decorator Alex Papachristidis spent a couple of years living in Greece as a child, he could often be found "riding my donkey into the living room, holding a rabbit, and being trailed by my three dogs." That devotion to animals is reflected today in the Manhattan apartment he shares with his partner, Scott Nelson, a luxury-goods purveyor. Pillows and chairs are upholstered in leopard-spot silk velvet; birds and butterflies flutter on vases; a porcelain monkey is used as a bookend. There are portraits of dogs and statues of cranes and deer. Elephants loom large in the scheme—two as lamp bases, another as a garden seat. In the master bedroom hangs a watercolor parrot painted by Walton Ford, a contemporary artist inspired by John James Audubon.

These zoological whimsies lighten otherwise formal rooms that incorporate Baroque, Régence, and Orientalist touches. "I never wanted one style to dominate the apartment because the hybrid creates such an inviting canvas for my ongoing acquisitions," says Papachristidis, who could probably collect in his sleep. "There is almost nothing out there that I couldn't bring home and find a place for." Indeed, tables are piled with mementos of the couple's travels that the decorator calls Grand Tour souvenirs: jeweled camels bearing eggs made of rare stones, Chinese silver-gilt snuffboxes, a Verdura magnifying glass in the shape of a turtle. Heavy with volumes about art, fashion, and design, a chinoiserie bookcase of gilded black lacquer handily divides the largest room in the apartment into living and dining areas.





In decorator Alex Pappachristidis's living room, 18th-century architecture from Dianet + Dotter are ophelates. In Fortuny's Elcira, the gilt turtle stool is antique, and the valance and curtains are made of Pierre Frey fabric; the mixed-media work is Rob Wynne Meissen Vialin. See Resources.



Clockwise from top left: A double-sided bookcase separates the living and dining areas. Scott Nelson, seated, and Alex Papachristidis with their Yorkshire terrier, Theodore, in the master bedroom. Antique bronzes from H. M. Luther are displayed on a 19th-century cabinet in the entrance hall, and the armchairs are upholstered in a Brunswick & Fils cotton. A large framed work by Alexander Liberman and a Louis XVI desk in the living area; the Igor Mitoraj face sculpture is from Patrizia Papachristidis. Facing page: In the dining area, Villa side chairs by J. Robert Scott are upholstered in Les Colonnes by Pierre Frey, the 19th-century toile-and-crystal chandelier is from John Rossall, and the table covering is an antique suzani.





Full-bore opulence is Papachristidis's trick to jazzing up the polite proportions of his 1960s apartment. But with all this wall-to-wall luxury, why use neutral sisal carpeting? "It's the breathing room," Papachristidis sagely notes. "Looking around my home reminds me why I finally shortened my name from Alexis to Alex. Can you just imagine, with my huge personality and a name like Alexis Papachristidis?" His arms fly up in the air. "It's just too much!"

But what many of the clients who've flocked to his door since he went into business in 1987 come for is his perfectly extravagant thoroughness. "I work very hard to understand what they like so that their home feels collected, as though it was an organic process, something that took place over time," Papachristidis says. "Also, I don't limit myself to the decor." A lifestyle guru as much as an interior decorator, he works with clients on their acquisitions of books and art,

sends them his favorite recipes, and trains their housekeepers how to properly fluff pillows. Papachristidis ornaments their beds with French nailheads and has their linens embroidered with threads dyed to match a bedroom's color scheme. And, he adds, "I recently introduced a client to vintage-clothes collecting."

For one client, Papachristidis is currently juggling residences in New York, Maine, and Florida. "You can't imagine how differently each of these projects is turning out," he says. "The New York place is very modern; Palm Beach is more whimsical, with a lot of prints and chinoiserie; Maine is much more casual than the other two, with primitive painted-wood finishes." Though they sound potentially grand, these homes, like all of Papachristidis's work, are meant for serious living. "Everything is designed to invite you in, to be sat on, interacted with, utilized," the ebullient decorator says. And even when he and Nelson order out at



An antique mirror from John Rossall and a Papachristidis-designed headboard in the master bedroom; the decorative cushions are made of Giaremont's Concini, the bed linens are by Matouk, and the walls are papered in Baldwin's Bamboo by Scalamandré. Facing page, clockwise from left: In the master bedroom, vintage Beatles posters hang above an 18th-century French desk, and the Italian terra-cotta dog is from John Rosselli. A vintage Chinese cabinet, an antique wicker chair, and gilt steps from Mecox Gardens in the library; the wall covering is by Clarence House. In the library, a 19th-century clock from Charlotte Moss and a Charles H. Beckley sofa. See Resources.



night for pizza, they use the good china and sterling silver. As he says with a smile, "You won't find those collecting dust."

Curiously, amid the furnishings of the master bedroom—an 18th-century French writing desk, a bookcase inspired by the ones Billy Baldwin designed for Cole Porter—are two of Richard Avedon's 1967 posters of the Beatles: "Nobody can believe that these used to be for sale in the back of *Look* magazine," Papachristidis says. "They're collector's items, but you can still snap them up at good flea markets or on eBay. I've had at least four friends and clients do just that after they saw these in my bedroom. I think perhaps the best part of my home is that you never know what you're going to see around the next corner."

That element of surprise has its roots in the decorator's high-flying childhood; he and his three sisters grew up with packed suitcases by their beds. His Greek father was 64 when his son was born: "He was really from another era—the jet-set years." As for his mother, he describes her as a cross between Auntie Mame and Maria Callas. "She hated the cold, so we followed the sun," Papachristidis says. "Our home was Manhattan, but on winter weekends we went to Bermuda."

Mrs. Papachristidis was responsible for more than just her son's geographic wanderlust. When he was eight years old, she bought an elaborate miniature manse for his Steiff stuffed animals—so elaborate, in fact, it had sterling-silver flatware. Soon Papachristidis began altering the building's wallpaper and hanging art. "By the time I was 10," he says, "the menagerie had outgrown the playhouse, and I was allowed to take over a chinoiserie cabinet." A great career had begun. ■

