

In the library of the Upper East Side apartment Alex Papachristidis designed for Samantha Rudin Earls and David Earls, the custom sofa is upholstered in a Manuel Canovas velvet with cushions in a Brunschwig & Fils cotton; the Louis XVI armchair is covered in a Braquenié fabric, the print is by Andy Warhol, and the walls are sheathed in a Manuel Canovas lambswool. **FACING PAGE:** The entry walls are covered in a Cole & Son paper and the side table is upholstered in a Holland & Sherry leather, and the Renoir portrait belonged to David's grandfather. For details, see Resources.





All in the Family

When a young couple need to reconcile her love of exuberant color and pattern with his more restrained aesthetic, who better to come to their rescue than her uncle, acclaimed designer and consummate diplomat Alex Papachristidis

TEXT by CELIA BARBOUR · PHOTOGRAPHY by MIKKEL VANG
PRODUCED by MIEKE TEN HAVE

An interior designer's goal is to make each project unique—a reflection of the client's distinctive character, rather than a reiteration of the decorator's own tastes and tics. But for Alex Papachristidis, the stakes may be higher than for others in his field. That's because so many of his clients spend time in one another's houses.

Take David Earls and Samantha Rudin Earls, for example, whose Upper East Side Manhattan apartment he recently completed: Her parents and her brother and sister-in-law live in homes designed by

Papachristidis as well—as does the designer himself, who happens to be Samantha's uncle. Moreover, until recently, all of these apartments were in the same building. No wonder, he says, "In our family, everybody has their own individual look." For Papachristidis, the injunction against repeating himself is also deeply personal. "Once I've used a pattern, it's done for me," he says. "It's a little bittersweet."

Fortunately, there's always an abundance of wonderful options available in the market—and he is a connoisseur of them all. The



Dining chairs by Liz O'Brien are covered in a Jasper fabric, the vintage table is from Objets Plus, and the print is by Anish Kapoor. **FACING PAGE, FROM TOP:** Samantha Rudin Earls and David Earls with their daughter, Elle, and dog, Mocha, on the terrace. The living room's custom sofa is covered in an Old World Weavers velvet, the Louis XVI armchairs are upholstered in a Fortuny velvet, and the vintage cocktail table is by P.E. Guerin; the print is another in the series by Kapoor, the 1960s lamps are by Maison Charles, and the walls are painted in Benjamin Moore's Yarmouth Blue. For details, see Resources.



designer is known for richly layering multiple prints and textures to compose exuberant visual feasts in his interiors.

With this apartment, he reined in that sense of profusion. Although Samantha is a longtime devotee of her uncle's sensibility, her new husband was accustomed to more sedate surroundings. (Married just a year when the project began, they welcomed their first child, Elle, during the renovation.) "Samantha's taste is bohemian and whimsical," says Papachristidis, who had designed her previous apartment when she was single (it was published in *ELLE DECOR* in May 2005). "It's colorful, rich, opulent, and daring. Her husband, on the other hand, likes a clean palette. He's very classic."

"Toned down and understated" is how David describes his own taste, adding that he's long eschewed prints. "And I always preferred silver to gold; to me, gold seemed ostentatious."

Meanwhile, says his wife, "I wasn't willing to live without gold. I wasn't willing to live without prints." Luckily, her uncle is adept at resolving such conflicts. "No matter what you throw at him, he can catch it and bring it together," Samantha says.

Color turned out to be a natural way to represent the interests of husband and wife in their new home. David likes blue; Samantha, purple. "So, if you notice, the entire apartment is purple and blue," says Papachristidis, breaking into a trademark laugh.

Yet for any couple, decorating shouldn't be just a matter of defending rival aesthetic territories, but also a process of exploration and discovery. "Alex opened my eyes in so many ways," says David. "Our library is the most patterned room in the house, but ironically, I





really love it." The sofa alone uses eight prints, textures, and trims. And there are flashes of gold—and silver—in every room.

The finished apartment held surprises for Samantha as well. "I'll always remember my first time sitting in the living room and thinking, Wow, this is like sitting in a cloud," she says. "I didn't realize I'd find it so calming and peaceful to be in this blue environment." For her, stepping into this world feels as transformative as slipping on a couture gown—one that has "been made just for you but also elevates you. Alex understands you and knows exactly what you like, but then he takes it to another level."

Although her husband might use a different metaphor, he, too, finds the experience of coming home to be uplifting. "You walk in the door and take a deep breath," David says. The entry is papered in a magical print of Venetian gondolas and lanterns—"something I always wanted to use," says Papachristidis. "I love it so, so much." Centered on one wall hangs a Renoir sketch that had been treasured by David's grandfather. "It was the one thing he said he'd take to a desert island," he says. However, having devoted himself to philanthropy, the grandfather wanted his collections to benefit good causes as well. "Sotheby's auctioned everything off," says David. "The money went to all these amazing charities." As for the Renoir, "Samantha's parents bought it and gave it to us." Beneath it in the entryway rests a bench very much like one that once belonged to Samantha's grandmother, a woman she describes as "very special to me."

No wonder the Earlses relish coming home. They are greeted by a perfect tableau—painting, paper, bench—symbolizing the beauty that can flourish when a family works together in harmony. ■





The custom bed in the master bedroom is upholstered in a Brunschwig & Fils fabric and dressed in bedding by Leontine Linens; the light fixture was found at a Paris flea market, the lamps are by Christopher Spitzmuller with custom shades by Blanche P. Field, and the rug is a custom design; the walls are sheathed in a linen by Manuel Canovas, and the curtains are of a silk by the same company, with Samuel & Sons trim. **FACING PAGE, FROM TOP:** In David's office, the steel desk by John Vesey was found at auction, the lamp is from John Rosselli Antiques, and the walls are covered in a Cowtan & Tout sisal-blend paper. The crib in Elle's room is by Dwell Studio, and the chair, a Paris flea-market find, is upholstered in the same Manuel Canovas fabric used for the shade; the walls are covered in a Cowtan & Tout cotton, and the carpet is by Beauvais. For details, see Resources.