

Contemporary art meets
Federal-style architecture
at a West Village town house
by Ghislaine Viñas

mixed media

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Ghislaine Viñas never designs anything older than right-this-minute. Paige West runs an on-line contemporary-art gallery, Mixed Greens, in a Viñas-designed office in the Starrett-Lehigh Building. So when West hired Viñas's CV Interior Design to transform a Federal-style West Village town house, only one obstacle stood between the pair and a consummately modern space: West's husband, real-estate developer John Keeler. Poring over fabric swatches and carpet samples, Viñas and West always arrived at the same question. "Do you think John will like this?"

A devotee of all things traditional, Keeler required some convincing. "Ghislaine was brilliant at showing John the →

Opposite: In the dining room, ceiling fixtures with molded maple-veneer shades hang near a photograph by Luis Gisbert.

Right: The Federal-style house was built in 1834.



whole picture. She'd invite us to her office and present pin boards of floor plans, pictures of furniture, colors and fabrics," says West. When he still showed reluctance, the twosome would tone it down a bit, choosing furniture with classic curves and masculine proportions. Viñas admits that the project sent her to showrooms she'd never set



foot in before, but the result of this design ménage à trois is less a series of compromises than a set of clever solutions.

Fortunately, the prior owner had rebuilt and reinforced the foundation and converted four existing apartments back into a single unit, which he ran as a homelike special-events venue. So Viñas could proceed straight to the fine-tuning.

To accommodate a mammoth ebonized-oak table—the only piece of furniture left over from the couple's former residence—Viñas opened up one sidewall of the entryway, removing two decorative fluted columns topped by wedding-cake capitals. She made the dining room look "both simple and period," she says, by installing plain squared-off columns to support the ceiling and replacing the elaborate fireplace surrounds with neoclassical versions that, despite super-size proportions, look born with the house.

In the library, Viñas built an entire wall of bookcases on →

Top: Viñas opened up the entry hall's wall to make way for the clients' 12-foot-long ebonized-oak dining table.

Bottom: The kitchen's custom counters are poured concrete. A shop in Hudson, New York, supplied the 1940's industrial pendant.

Opposite: Stained-oak custom cocktail tables and a carved cut-pile rug establish the living room's circular theme, reasserted by Steve DeFrank's wacky self-portrait in Lite-Brite pegs.





a curve in order to achieve a feeling of depth. The celery Ultrasuede-covered custom ottoman would look right at home in an English country house—except for the playfully striped piping and button covers.

Keeler was most resistant to Viñas's out-there color repertoire. After showing him swatch after swatch of chartreuse, he finally put his foot down: "No green." She got around his mandate by switching from yellowish to bluish greens, among a rainbow of other choices. The TV room's walls and sofa are enveloped in watermelon red. Sunny yellow paint brightens the basement office. The living room fell into place with irreverent lemon-meringue stripes on a pair of updated-Louis XVI armchairs and key-lime green on the walls. Outrageous tangelo walls and ribbed-glass cabinet doors lend a domestic warmth to the kitchen's custom poured-concrete countertops and stainless-steel tile, used in place of wainscoting.

Veering away from her usual vibrant surfaces, Viñas painted the dining room taupe. "You can put any kind of art on this color," says West. And so she



did. Faced with three contiguous walls, she established a sort of room-size triptych. The centerpiece, by Luis Gispert, is a 6-foot-wide stylized photograph of three women holding a seance. For the flanking sides of the triptych, she searched her own collection for work that wouldn't compete with Gispert's colors. To the right hangs Vik Muniz's trompe l'oeil black-and-white photo of a solitary piece of string fashioned into the shape of a boat on a lake. To the left is a series of "surrogates" by Allan McCollum: plaster of paris cast to look like paintings, frames and all.

More visual humor crops up in the master bedroom's rug, a tongue-in-cheek assemblage of cut-up cashmere sweaters—the occasional tag and button still intact. Bringing further →

Opposite: The TV room features an easy-opening sleep sofa, an internally lit acrylic cocktail table by James Hyde, and four photographs by Coke O'Neal.

Top: Mixed Greens artists personalized the notepaper clipped to the library's Ingo Maurer ceiling fixture. The gouache above the mantel is by Russell Nachman. **Center:** An oil pastel by Ken Weaver hangs in the wet bar. **Bottom:** Viñas upholstered the basement office's seating in espadrille cotton. The word "portrait" of Paige West is by Janice Krasnow.

texture, the walls' celadon-colored grass cloth contrasts with the yellow wool felt on the upholstered headboard. Lest its camelback silhouette strike too traditional a note, Viñas turned once again to West's art collection. Over the fireplace hangs *Bumstead off His Feet*, a per-versely pop John Wesley acrylic of Blondie's comic-strip husband, Dagwood. 🍷

DESIGN COORDINATOR: RICHARD M. RAHN. CEILING FIXTURES (DINING ROOM): SALON MODERNE. CABINET: THROUGH INTÉRIEURS. CUSTOM RUG: ODEGARD. TABLE (DINING ROOM), BED, TABLE (GUEST ROOM): HOLLY HUNT. CUSTOM COUNTERTOPS (KITCHEN): GET REAL SURFACES. WINDOW-SEAT CUSHION FABRIC: MARIMEKKO THROUGH DELGRECO & CO. CUSTOM WINDOW-SEAT CUSHION (KITCHEN), CUSTOM PILLOW SHAMS (MASTER BEDROOM), CUSTOM WINDOW TREATMENTS: HOME WORKS. SOFA (LIVING ROOM): MOSAIC. CUSTOM COCKTAIL TABLES: PROPERTY. RUG: ANGELA ADAMS. SOFA FABRIC (LIVING ROOM, TV ROOM), PILLOW FABRIC (TV ROOM): OSBORNE & LITTLE. CHAIRS (LIVING ROOM), LAMP (MASTER BEDROOM): BAKER TRIBECA. CHAIR FABRIC (LIVING ROOM), PILLOW-SHAM FABRIC (MASTER BEDROOM): KRAVET. SOFA (TV ROOM): FORMAT. CLUB CHAIR (LIBRARY): PROFILES; MAHARAM (FABRIC). CEILING FIXTURE: INGO MAURER. SHADE FABRIC (LIBRARY), CHAIR, OTTOMAN FABRIC (OFFICE), GRASS CLOTH, BED (MASTER BEDROOM): DONGHIA FURNITURE/TEXTILES. DISHWASHER (WET BAR): MIELE. SINK FITTINGS (WET BAR), TUB, FITTINGS (BATHROOM): DORNBRACHT. CHAIR, OTTOMAN (OFFICE): M2L. SHADE FABRIC (MASTER BEDROOM): ROBERT ALLEN. LAMP (GUEST ROOM): AERO STUDIOS. CABINET: THROUGH ABC CARPET & HOME. CHAIR, OTTOMAN (TERRACE): BROWN JORDAN INTERNATIONAL. ARCHITECT OF RECORD: LACINA GROUP ARCHITECTS. GENERAL CONTRACTOR: EUROPEAN AMERICAN CARPENTRY.

Top, from left: The wool felt on the master bedroom's headboard contrasts with the grass cloth on the walls. In the basement guest room, the wengé headboard of a two-poster by Christian Liaigre frames an eclectic collection of 20th-century porcelain. Bottom: For the master bathroom, Viñas chose a Phillippe Starck tub and limestone flooring.

Opposite: The pool house at a 1920's Vanderbilt mansion in Palm Beach, Florida, yielded the leaded bottle-glass windows overlooking the roof terrace. Cypress fencing and teak furniture lend the terrace its distinctive rustic modernism.

