

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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MADONNA



ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST VISITS:

Madonna



"WHAT I WANTED MOST was just to love my environment," says Madonna of her apartment in an unassuming brick building on Manhattan's Upper West Side. As conceived and executed by the creative hand of Christopher G. Ciccone, her younger brother and most trusted confidant, the apartment is a low-key yet glamorous sanctuary, a place that allows her, once inside, a temporary escape.

Madonna entrusted her brother with the design of her Los Angeles house (she gave him ten days to do it) and never thought of having anyone else envision and execute the New York space. "Who could I have more in common with than someone I grew up with?" Madonna says of her choice of designer. "We like the same things, from music to what we eat." Although Ciccone has no formal art training, he designed the stage sets for the *Evilde Ambition* tour, which was the setting for the documentary *Truth or Dare*, and he is an artist in his own right. But he is wholly self-taught in the area of interior design.

Ciccone knew early on what he wanted to do. "I wanted to create a New York apartment. In Los Angeles the living spaces are big, wide open. There are loftlike attributes to them, and also the feeling of living in a penthouse. In New York I wanted to make a space for her that was elegant without being weak, peaceful without being boring. She prefers New York to Los Angeles because when she's here she can relax. There's a city here—you feel you are with people,

living with the rest of the world, not confined to an automobile. But it still had to be a place she would feel safe in. Even though there's a view of Central Park, you don't feel exposed to anything."

The apartment, he explains, had originally been three separate units. "Madonna and Sean [Penn] bought the first apartment—the living room, dining room, a much smaller kitchen and two small bedrooms—maybe five or six years ago," he says. "A second one was purchased after their divorce a couple of years ago, and a third—which constitutes the back sitting room and bath—was acquired six months later when the place had been gutted, which of course made it necessary to change the plans."



"Subdued elegance" is how Christopher G. Ciccone describes the Art Deco setting he created for Madonna's apartment. ABOVE: The designer, who is Madonna's brother, by Tamara de Lempicka's *Nu et à la Colombe*, 1936.

OPPOSITE AND COVER: Setting the mood tone in the entrance is a circa 1930 Frouon print titled *Nu et à la Colombe* by French photographer Laure Albin Guillot and a Pompeian-style klismos chair from the late 19th century.

RIGHT: Ciccone, who converted three small apartments into one, kept the original circa 1915 leaded-glass doors. ABOVE: A second klismos chair in the vestibule is a circa 1790 Irish cobalt-blue-and-white mirror. The circa 1924 gilt-bronze *Sie et Mare* chandelier has a bowl signed by Duxon. Rug by Edward Field.



Ciccone made virtually all the major design decisions, talking with Madonna once a week, while architect Stephen Wang, a partner of the New York firm Procter and Wang, carried them out. The style that emerged is a classic early Art Déco look. Ciccone kept as many original details of the 1915 building as possible, such as moldings and fireplaces, and paid attention to all-new minutiae, including the doorknobs and the color of screws. "I wanted to stay away from American Déco and late Déco," he says, "because I felt this style was easier to live with and would age well."

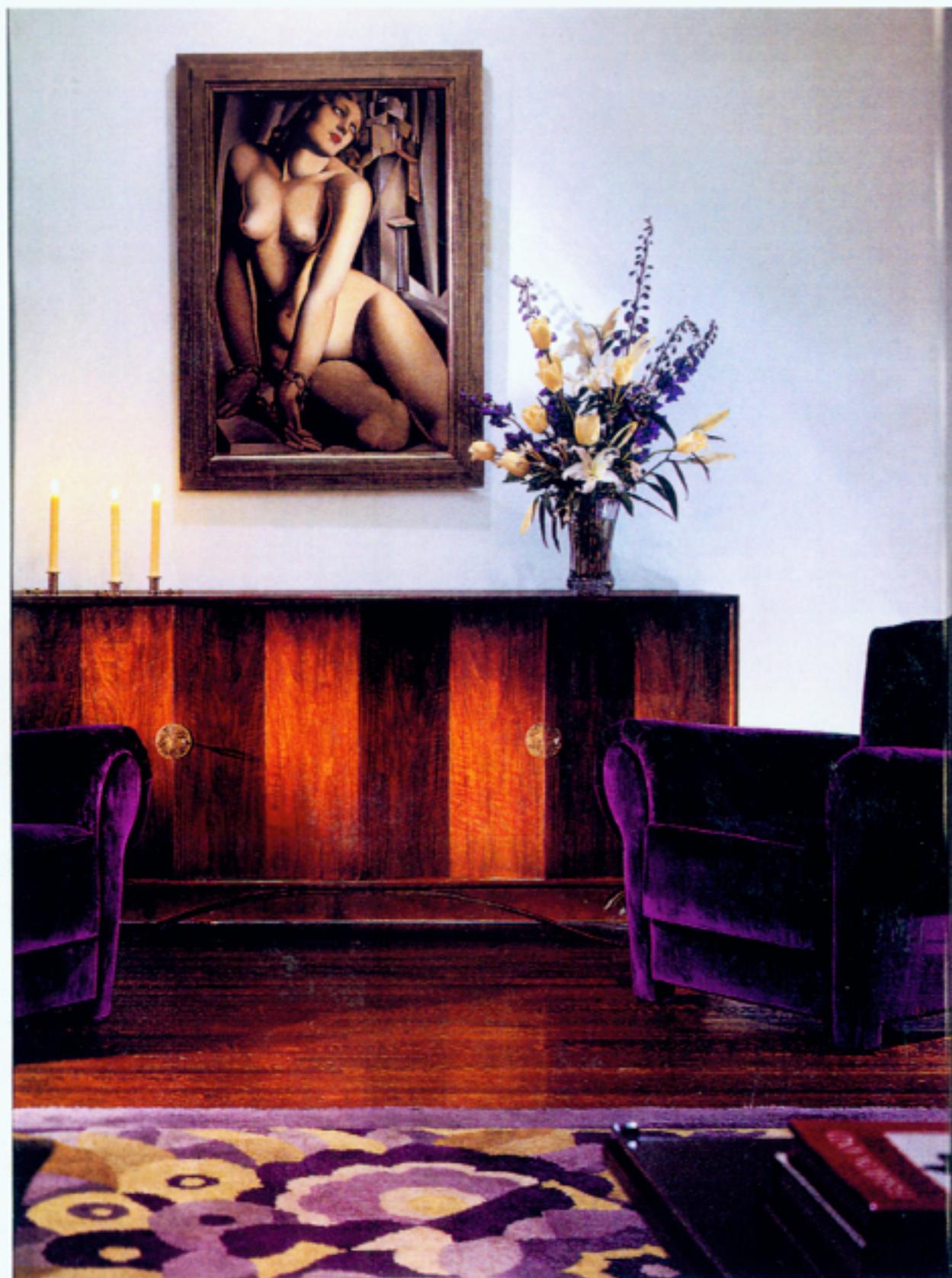
The main problem was to make the three apartments feel as though they had always been one. Working with Stephen Wang, Ciccone got the effects he wanted, especially in the hallway, a long barrel-vaulted space that runs from the living and dining rooms down to Madonna's bedroom and dressing room at the end of the apartment. "A hallway is a very important part of a New York apartment," says Ciccone. "If you've got one, it means you have lots of room. It's something grand and should be given a certain amount of elegance. A castle is not a castle without a moat. A New York apartment should have a great hallway." There were problems installing the central air-conditioning (which Madonna never uses anyway because she prefers open windows) and the lighting, but in this instance Ciccone decided it had to be his way. Says Wang, "With his artistic background, Christopher has fewer constraints than an architect."

The spaces are breezily cozy rather than sweeping or grand, and the colors subdued, even in the vestibule,

"I get strength from my art—all the paintings I own are powerful," says Madonna. *Les Deux Bicyclettes*, 1944, by Fernand Léger hangs over the living room mantel. *Le Courir Vêlé*, 1932, by Dalí is framed by Mondrian-style bookshelves designed by Ciccone. The Art Déco pieces—a macassar ebony low table by Jean Pastoulet by the sofa, the armchairs at left by Eugène Printz, two walnut bergères en gondole, foreground, by Armand-Albert Rateau and the circular lacquered table by Dominique—are all anchored by the circa 1930 rug, initialed "C.R." Sofa fabric is from Clarence House.









OPPOSITE: A circa 1930 sideboard by Eugène Printz features one of his signature design motifs—accordion-folded doors. *Andromeda*, 1929, by Tamara de Lempicka and a pair of late-1930s American club chairs are grouped in another area of the living room.

ABOVE: Christopher Ciccone designed a built-in mahogany buffet to complement the circa 1930 dining table and chairs by Jean Pascaud. On the wall is *Nata de Herent*, 1930, by de Lempicka. Chair and silk *noiré* drapery fabrics by André Bon.

where a Picasso-inspired rug is complemented by a *Sûe et Mare* chandelier and an 18th-century Irish oval mirror. The living room, where Ciccone left the original molding, is a comfortable amalgam of dark blues, deep purples and some mossy greens. Madonna owns four paintings by Tamara de Lempicka, in which female figures are refracted against deep-colored geometric patterns, and the room reflects that angled elegance. The sofa was made from photos of Coco Chanel's studio; Mondrian-inspired bookshelves, designed by Ciccone when the first apartment was

purchased, flank a fireplace; and alabaster sconces cast a soft glow over a Steinway baby grand piano.

Madonna's art collection, however, is the key to the apartment. Vintage photographs, mostly of female nudes, including works by André Kertész, look more like a series of abstract shapes than human figures. A Salvador Dalí depicts a veiled red heart, somehow fitting for this comfortable yet completely stylized environment. "I get strength from my art—all the paintings I own are powerful," says Madonna. "As an artist myself, I know what it's like to put your heart

and soul into something. You can feel the presence of another person."

Darlene Lutz, who for five years has advised Madonna on her art collection (which includes two coveted Frida Kahlo paintings that hang in California) and helped shop for many of her furnishings and objects from Paris to Los Angeles, takes it one step further. "It's no secret that Madonna is an appropriator of images," says Lutz. "Everything she does tells a story. She takes the narrative out of the art and puts it into her work. When she was collecting de Lempicka, for instance, you could see



ABOVE: "I love the office because I can use my fax machine and look at my Picasso at the same time," says Madonna. *Buste de Femme à la Frange*, 1938, hangs over a desk designed by Ciccone. Above a 19th-century Russian side table is *Les Femmes d'Alger*, circa 1930, by Pierre Dubreuil. Antique Persian rug is on the floor.

those forms in the videos, as in the one for *Express Yourself*. A recent series of portraits of her by Steven Meisel was much like the photographic work by Brassai." Lutz adds that Madonna's collecting is a learning process. "She's not big on three-dimensional work, but sometimes I still show it to her. We go constantly to exhibitions and to see collections, and that gives me the opportunity to see how she is looking at things, which changes all the time. I've never gone out with a checklist of artwork from a certain period. That has never

been my—or Madonna's—focus."

Some of Christopher Ciccone's designs were influenced by the furniture of the lesser-known Art Déco designer Eugène Printz. "I consider him a grandfather of decorative arts," he says. "He was doing a familiar thing at the time, but always with a twist. His work was never perfectly streamlined." One of Printz's signature design motifs—accordion-folded doors (*portes-accorcion*) on cabinets—was adapted by Ciccone for the cabinet doors in the dining room and the head- and footboards of Madonna's

bed. "I didn't like him in his purest form," says Ciccone. "It was too much of one thing, which I feel gets boring. It may be great to look at once, but to continue to reenter a room over and over and not get tired of it... That's why this apartment is made the way it is."

The kitchen is in direct contrast to the main living areas, a combination of white tile and stainless steel. Although the majority of the apartment was designed by Ciccone, he says the kitchen was the most "collaborative effort." One specific Madonna request: a breakfast nook that was made to resemble a booth in a 1950s diner. Over this booth, however, instead of a jukebox, is a 1927 photograph by Jacques-Henri Lartigue of two women called *The Rose Twins*. The space is useful but small, made for intimate gatherings. "I don't like rooms you never use or that are wasted space," says Madonna, "but I also like a sparseness and a clearness." But, Ciccone adds, "Madonna doesn't cook much. I think she has a couple of cookbooks, and now and then she makes Rice Krispies treats, but I wanted to give her the option if she wanted to," he jokes.

The same intimacy is true of the dining room across the vestibule. The highly burnished Art Déco table was one of the first pieces bought by Penn and Madonna. The kitchen was even smaller then, so they ate breakfast there, not wanting to eat standing over the stove.

Off the hallway is a guest bedroom, with a central square of recessed lighting almost tracing the

OPPOSITE: Stainless steel resonates through the kitchen, in contrast with the rest of the apartment. "I didn't want to do an Art Déco kitchen," says Ciccone. "You get the best appliances and work around them. But the only reason there's a microwave is that Madonna likes to make popcorn." Sub-Zero refrigerator.





ABOVE: Along the barrel-vaulted hallway, which Ciccone designed and architect Stephen Wang executed, are numerous vintage prints, including *Nude*, 1925, by George Platt Lynes (at rear) and a series of nude distortions by André Kertész.

perimeter of the bed, and Madonna's office, where Ciccone devised Indian rosewood shelving and a multifaceted desk that folds open and closed.

Taking center stage in Madonna's bedroom is a king-size bed, with Ciccone's version of Printz's accordion-folded head- and footboards, in front of a series of tied-back draperies. "The bed is theatrical but subdued, very appropriate to my client," says Ciccone, laughing. "And she wanted yellow in the room, but I didn't exactly want to put lemon on the walls. I wanted something that glowed in a serene way." What he found was a shade of yellowish beige

that every piece of fabric and every object in the room picks up on and reflects. He devised an oval ceiling light fixture, also inspired by a Printz design, which lights indirectly, softening the room's edges. The six-sided dressing room ("This is where she hides," says Ciccone), which continues the same colors and has the same oval ceiling lighting, features a small vanity table flanked by two closets with built-in drawers because, as her brother explains, "Madonna doesn't like dressers standing around."

One of the most striking rooms is the bath, where a series of repeating pointed Moorish arches—an appro-

BELOW: The burl maple bed with copper trim and the burnished-copper oval ceiling light fixture were both created by Ciccone after designs by Printz. A pair of circa 1830 Paris urn lamps flank the bed, and a circa 1930 lamp by Albert Cheuret rests between two American Art Deco club chairs. Léger's *Trois Femmes à la Table Rouge*, 1921, hangs over the mantel. Drapery and chair fabrics, André Bon; carpet and rug, Edward Fields.



printed Casbah of sorts—echoes the vaulted hallway. One arched doorway separates the front part of the room where the tub is located from the marble-lined steam shower with a marble seat (“I think everyone connected with the apartment has tried the shower,” Ciccone says). The win-

dows, which open with white tassel pulls, are also arched; even the medicine cabinet is a double-doored arch. And everything is covered in white Italian marble with a hint of rose vein, except in the shower, where the vein is a deep gray.

For the shower, which has a mar-

ble frame, Stephen Wang had to figure out how to “work out a door with a vaulted head and make the hardware work too,” he points out. “A frameless shower door and a vault may look simple, but they’re not easy to achieve.” Adds Christopher Ciccone, “Stephen was great in letting





ABOVE: A series of Moorish pointed arches, repeated on the door of the steam shower and medicine chest, punctuates the bath, which Ciccone covered in rectangular pieces of Italian marble. The bathtub has silvered claw-and-ball feet.

my creativity take precedence. I would submit poor drawings, which would be corrected. I learned a lot from watching him work."

Meanwhile, Ciccone can't seem to let go of this job. Like his sister, he is constantly changing, rearranging, adjusting, reinventing. "I don't think you ever truly finish a job like this," he says. "People's tastes continue to evolve and change. I would

be surprised if Madonna was content with this for the next ten years." Madonna, of course, knows her own mind about these things. "We call Christopher the pope because everything has to get his seal of approval," she says. "But I wouldn't say the apartment is one hundred percent finished. I like to change. A new lamp, a piece of art, can transform a room. I reserve the right to do that."

RIGHT: Another oval ceiling light softens the angles of the six-sided dressing room. Over the fireplace is *The Young King of the Black Isles*, 1906, by Maxfield Parrish. The Art Deco armchair is attributed to Michel Dufet and the dressing table to Paul Follot. The 1930s rug is signed "P. Leconte." Edward Fields carpet



