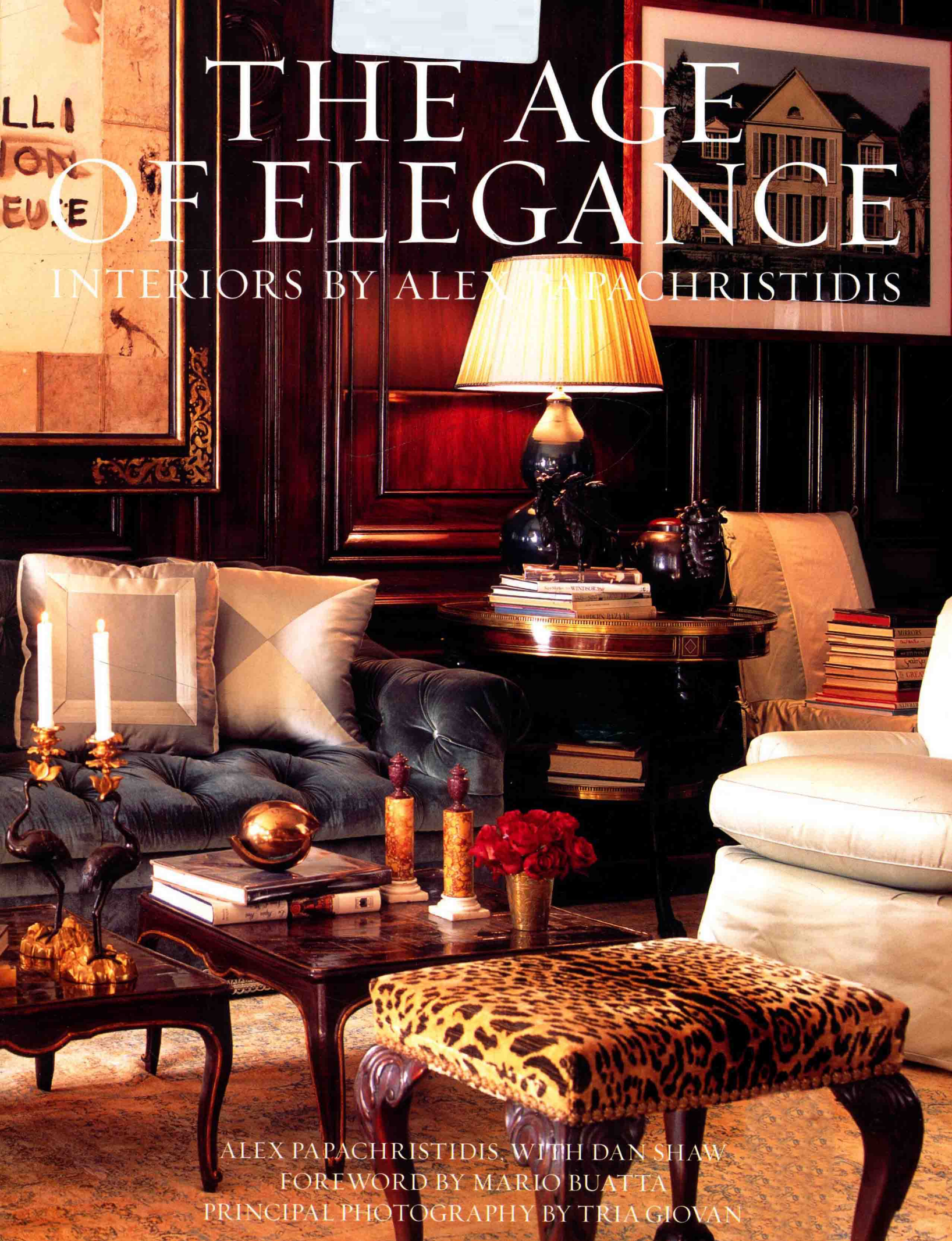


THE AGE OF ELEGANCE

INTERIORS BY ALEX PAPACHRISTIDIS



WRITTEN WITH DAN SHAW
FOREWORD BY MARIO BUATTA



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PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY TRIA GIOVAN

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Henry Bourne: pages 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35

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Raimund Koch: pages 90, 92, 93, 94, 96, 97, 99

Thomas Loof: jacket cover (back) and pages 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 60, 61, 62, 63, 223

Peter Margonelli: pages 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169

Stewart O'Shields: pages 9, 10

Simon Upton/The Interior Archive: jacket cover (front) and pages 157, 158, 159, 160, 161

PAGE 1: In a connoisseur's Manhattan living room, an Old World gilt-wood Gainsborough chair upholstered in silk leopard print and a custom Venetian sofa with gilt finials and bun feet are paired with a modern bronze sculpture by Beverly Pepper and an abstract painting by Cleve Gray.

PAGES 2–3: My 2005 Kips Bay Show House room, "Salon de Bois," featured a large painting by Julian Schnabel hung over a tufted sofa upholstered in silk velvet from Brunschwig & Fils. A pair of eighteenth-century coffee tables with Korean panels are flanked by gilt-wood Gainsborough chairs on an antique carpet from Doris Leslie Blau. PAGE 4: A ceramic lamp from Daniel Barney stands on a marble-topped eighteenth-century gilt-wood console from Kentshire Galleries in my 2005 "Salon de Bois" Kips Bay Show House room. PAGE 5: For the "Salon de Bois" Kips Bay Show House room, I had the curtains hand-stenciled by Andy Holland. A marble antiquity from Fortuna Fine Arts stands on a mahogany Georgian desk from Hyde Park Antiques, which is surrounded by early Georgian gilt-wood chairs from Kentshire. The tree-branch standing lamps were from Vaughan, and the antique Persian carpet from Doris Leslie Blau. PAGE 6: Hand-painted Gracie wallpaper and a white-and-gold antique chair are an appropriately sophisticated prelude to my mother's suite in my sister and brother-in-law's apartment. At the end of the hall, a white ceramic bull's-eye mirror by Eve Kaplan for Gerald Bland hangs over an eighteenth-century gilt-wood console that holds a silver and bronze Japanese vase with gilt-wood flowers.

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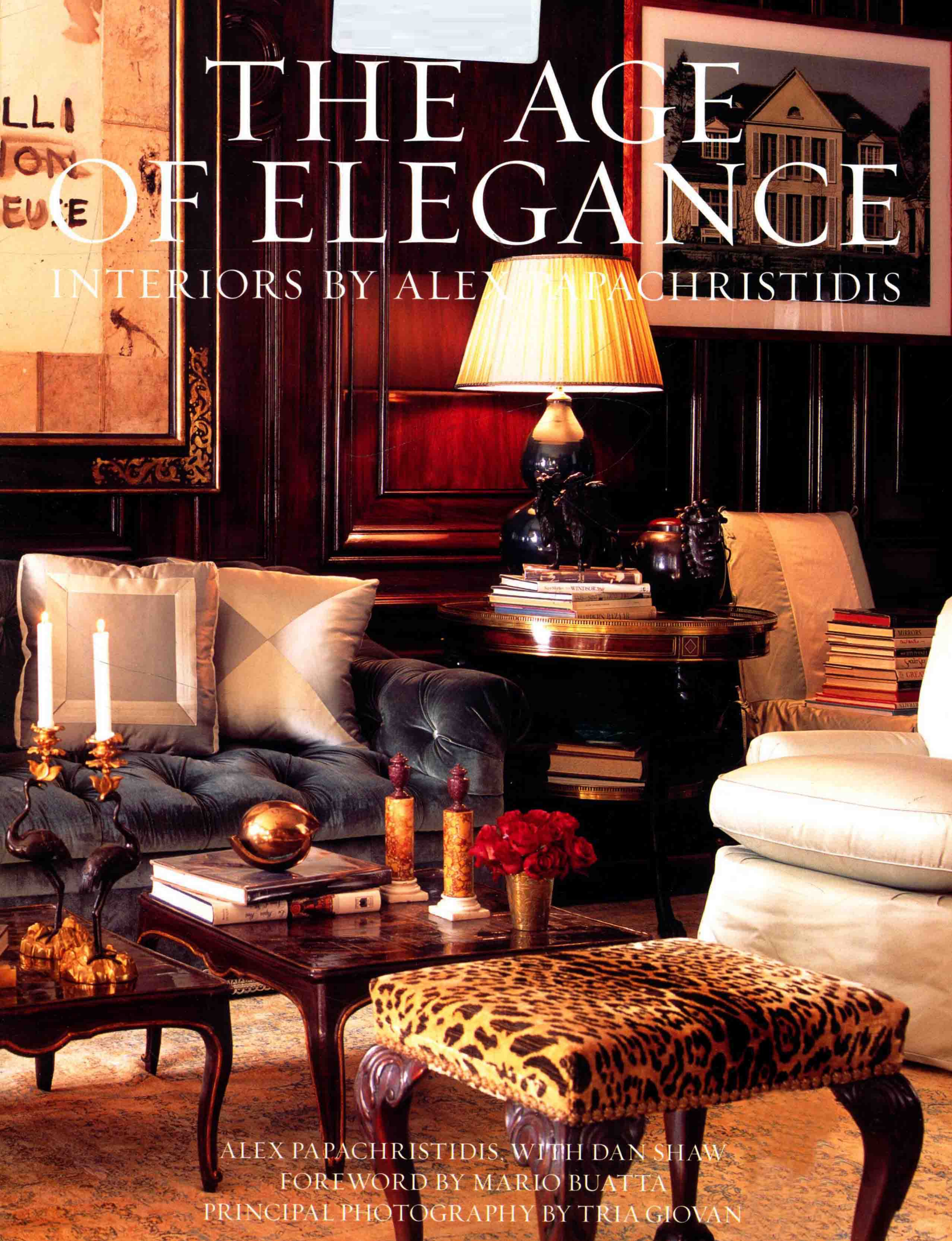
Art Direction: Doug Turshen with Steve Turner

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TO MY MOTHER, MARIYA, A WOMAN
WITH AN AWE-INSPIRING SENSE OF
STYLE AND JOIE DE VIVRE, WHO TOOK
ME ALL OVER THE WORLD AND EXPOSED
ME TO THE WONDERS OF LIFE.





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FOREWORD

by Mario Buatta



lex Papachristidis's work is very thoughtful, very personal, and very livable. It looks as though people actually live in his rooms. His style is charming and eclectic, and he has a knack for making rooms feel as if they've been there for a long time. He puts different periods together, mixing contemporary and traditional in a way that looks cozy and comfortable. His work has a sense of history, which I appreciate. There are not many designers today who do what he does.

Like me, he's detail oriented, which I respect. He knows his antiques, and he does wonderful things with trims and fabrics. I don't like rooms that look as though they were put together in six weeks—or six months. I like a room to look as if it's been there for a long, long time and evolved over several generations. Nowadays, it's harder to find good antiques unless you are decorating with mid-century, but Alex does. His rooms are very thought out, and that requires time, which can be tough for clients who want everything done yesterday.

A good decorator brings out his clients' personalities. Most of them don't know what they want, but if you show it to them and teach them, they will get excited and involved. Alex's rooms look as though they belong to clients who've been educated—people who *care*. He does a very nice job of setting the stage for them to act out their lives. He understands that people will inherit things, buy things, and collect things. He knows they will add to and subtract from his rooms, which is what living is all about.

Besides being talented, he is a gentleman who exudes warmth and caring. He's got a great smile—and he loves people and dogs. He comes from a big, friendly family and that shows in his work, suggesting the great English country houses that get their character from being family homes passed down through generations. If I weren't a decorator myself, I would hire him.

OPPOSITE: "Shangri-La" was the name of the 2000 Kips Bay Show House bedroom I created with Toni Raeymaekers, my former partner and still very dear friend. The seating area featured sofas upholstered in a tree-of-life Braquenié with an antique Uzbek draped over an arm. The magnificent Dutch mirror over the fireplace was from Florian Papp.





INTRODUCTION

There's no more important place in the world than your own home. Whether you live alone or with children, in-laws, assorted pets, and a spouse, your home should reflect your personality and soothe your soul. Having traveled all over the world, I've been awed and dazzled by the sites I've seen and places I've visited, but the site that inspires and touches me the most with its beauty is my own home. My joy in coming home is not a sentimental reflex; I've put a lot of thought, time, and energy into how I live, and I am rewarded every day by my effort. I put the same amount of thought and care into my clients' happiness and comfort.

I was taught the value of living well by my parents. My Canadian mother has always been an Auntie Mame figure—super glamorous, intelligent, and charming. My Greek father was imposing and very much a gentleman of the old school. They were aesthetes with high standards. Good manners were very important to them, but so was enjoying life and experiencing the world on every level. They exposed me to so much—museums, art, theater, travel—that I developed an insatiable curiosity and a far-reaching continental sensibility.

We moved constantly in Manhattan (though once my mother took us to Greece for the summer, and we stayed for two years), which may explain why I empathize with clients confronted with an empty space that they want to turn into a home. I grew up discussing the decoration of our apartments with my mother. Although she loves antiques and old-world luxury, we always lived in brand-new buildings: She never liked to live where anyone had

OPPOSITE: For the Kips Bay Show House “Shangri-La” bedroom, Jane Holzer lent us the Warhol portrait of Elizabeth Taylor that hangs over the custom bed upholstered in Braquenié. A Queen Anne secretary from Kentshire made for a fabulous night table. The graphic stenciled floors were by the incomparable Andy Holland.

already lived. We always had apartments on high floors with wonderful light and views but lacking in inherent charm or architectural presence. As a result, my mother's uncanny ability to mix antiques and modern furnishings has been essential in giving them an elegance that reflects her stylish sensibility and made us feel at home.

Like the French furniture and modern art that made her heart race, my mother is formidable, and her zest for living has always been infectious. We are a very close family—consisting of my parents, my sisters, and a brother who have all supported my decorating career. I spent a lot of time with my mother as she made the rounds of shops and galleries to furnish our homes. Once people met her, they never forgot her, and to this day, people in the antiques business always ask me how she is. She has always been impeccably dressed and loves beautiful clothes, so for the longest time I thought I might go into the fashion business because I had the eye and the vocabulary from all the time I spent shopping with her.

But it turned out, I was not really cut out for life on Seventh Avenue; nor was I a great fit for the family's international shipping business I was expected to enter. Then, in a stroke of inspiration, my childhood friend Laura Broumand hit upon the perfect career for me. I had finished college, and we were sitting in my first apartment when she said, "Alex, you have such great taste—you should be a decorator." It was a brilliant suggestion, because decorating is a profession that combines my passions for beauty and for bringing people joy. It's a genteel field that allows me to interact with sophisticated, artistic individuals on a daily basis, allowing me to be my best self.

My sister Ophelia was my first big client. She and her husband, Bill, were moving to a large apartment on Park Avenue, and she'd been interviewing some of New York's most respected interior designers. Finally, she came to me and said, "Why would I want to use a stranger to decorate my home? Why don't *you* do it?" It was an ambitious assignment and life-changing opportunity. My sister has her own very personal sense of style, yet she believed in me 100 percent and I have been decorating homes for her, Bill, and my niece, Samantha, and nephew,

Michael, ever since. As I write this, I am putting the final touches on her new apartment. Her faith and loyalty have meant everything to me.

There are three other women who have played an integral role in my career. My first business partner was Leslie Anderson. It was just the two of us in the early years; we'd do all the decorating together and then she'd go home and type the invoices at night. Eventually, she got married and started raising children in Connecticut, and her life got so busy that when she and her husband built their new home in Greenwich, she tapped me to be their decorator. After Leslie, I hired the fabulously stylish Fruzsina Keehn to be my right hand. We shared a sensibility and became best friends. After a few years, she moved to England to pursue a career as a jewelry designer, and she brought me to London to help decorate her flat. Eventually, I took on another partner, Toni Raeymaekers, who helped me expand my business into what it is today. We collaborated blissfully for eight years until she decided to get remarried and move to Europe.

For a long time, even after these women were no longer my colleagues, I kept "Anderson, Papachristidis, Raeymaekers" as the name of the firm so they would know the door was open if they ever wanted to come back. But eventually it became clear that they had moved on for good, and I decided to change the name of the firm to Alex Papachristidis Interiors. I vowed that I would never take on another business partner because I couldn't bear losing one ever again—it's too emotional.

My passion for elegance makes me a very traditional decorator in many respects. I am drawn to the eighteenth century, when some of the greatest furniture ever designed was made. To my mind, even the best modern furniture references eighteenth-century shapes and silhouettes, which have a classic, timeless quality. I like to layer historical elements into every interior because if everything is new, a home can only have a superficial charm, and I believe a home should have depth of character. My approach is in its own way very old school as well: I like to have a relationship with everything in a home, so it is filled with conversation pieces—things that possess not only style but also stories. I have to sit in a chair and touch a piece of fabric before making a decision about a purchase.