

NEW YORK

The Palazzo on Beekman Place

A pied-à-terre in a 1925 building overlooking the East River channels Isabella Stewart Gardner's Venice.

By Wendy Goodman

Photography by William Jess Laird



The Living Room The tapestries are from an antiques shop in Amsterdam and were framed at Eli Wilner & Company. The pair of Louis XVI chairs are from Silla Antiques & Art in Pennsylvania. The pelmet was found at an Upper East Side antiques show. “The coffee table was left by the previous owner,” Sandra Liotus says.

Sandra Liotus and her partner, David Crampton Barden, live in a 1925 building on Beekman Place that was designed to resemble a Venetian palace. The architects William Treanor and Maurice Fatio even treated the East River as the Grand Canal, adding a private dock for residents to moor their boats.

By the time Liotus, an American lighting designer, and Crampton-Barden, a British lighting engineer, moved into the co-op in 2013, the waterfront features were long gone. But the Italianate courtyard garden remained, and they have direct access to it from their one-bedroom pied-à-terre.

“With everything found or displayed, I ask myself, Is this something that Isabella Stewart Gardner would have collected?” Liotus says, referring to the Boston socialite with the Venice fixation.

Liotus and Crampton-Barden decorated the living room with tapestries and 18th- and 19th-century art and furniture. As the owners of a bespoke lighting company based in Newport, Rhode Island, where they spend most of their time, they are experts in the unique needs of historic homes and buildings filled with light-sensitive canvases, fabrics, and objects.

Among their first commissions were the Houghton Library at Harvard and the model cases at the New York Yacht Club, which led to work for the late financier David Rockefeller Sr., whose East 65th Street townhouse was originally designed by Treanor & Fatio.

“We started in 2001 lighting his Picasso, *Young Girl With a Flower Basket*, which had belonged to Gertrude Stein,” says Liotus. “We then moved on to the living room, lighting one great masterpiece after another.”

On Beekman Place, Liotus and Crampton-Barden’s artworks are illuminated by glass fiber-optic cables discreetly tucked into the ceiling that use camera-quality lenses and don’t emit heat or ultraviolet radiation. “There used to be six prints here,” Liotus says, pointing to a wall with framed tapestries. “The fittings were lighting the prints. By just changing the lensing, we could transfer the light onto the tapestries.” But not all the light in the space is artificial. During the winter, the two of them enjoy serving high tea and sandwiches in front of a fire, and, when it’s warm, they crack open the front door and windows to let in the breeze from the river.



The Dining Area The gateleg table is from an antique shop in Massachusetts. The candlesticks are from the Lacquer Chest in London. The wooden box with the tapestry fragment is from San Francisco. “The painted tray I brought back from Venice,” Liotus says.

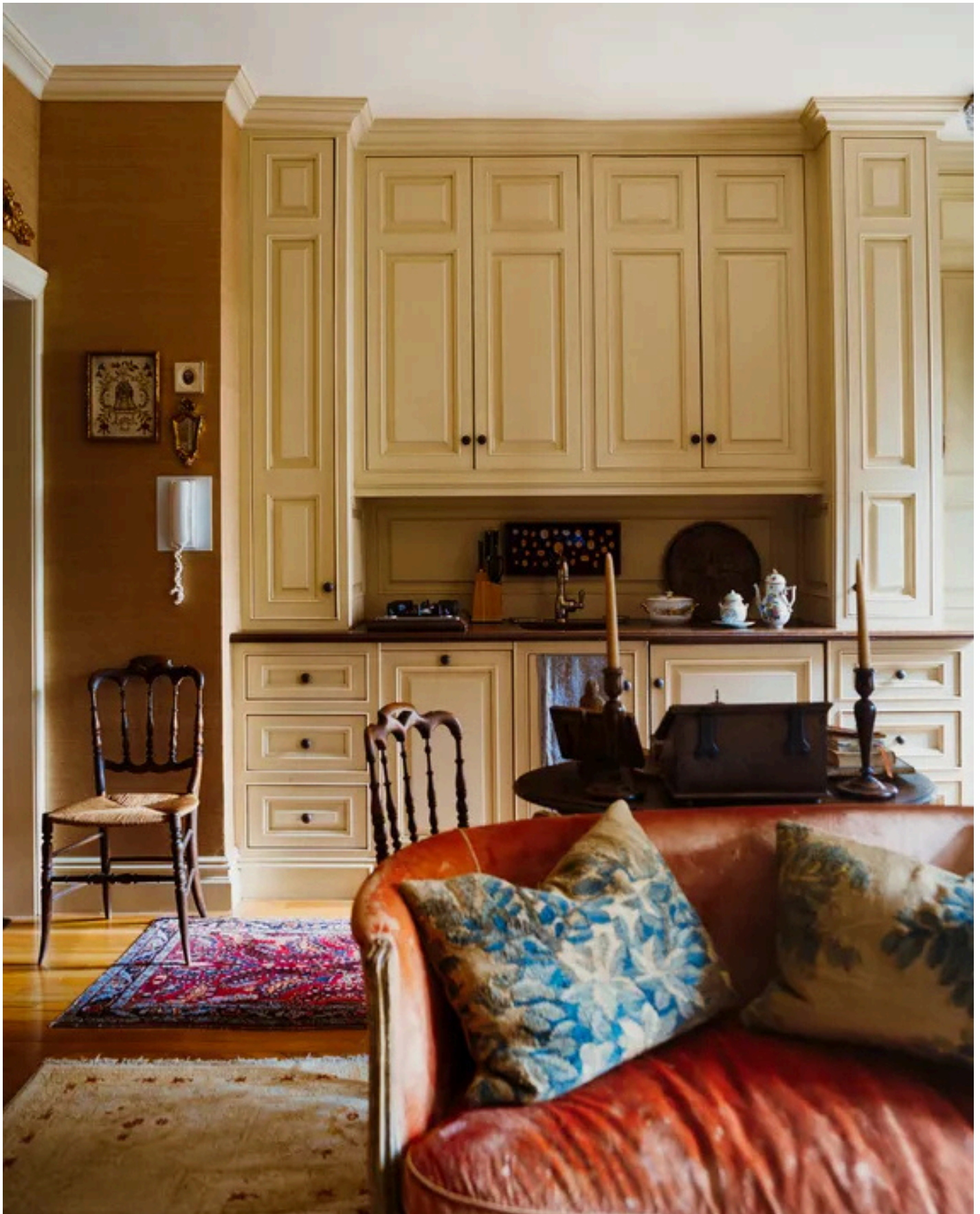
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The Hallway The doorframe is draped with fabric from the Venice shop Ca' Nova Tessuti e Tendaggi. The tapestry chair is from the Newport Show.



The Artwork The ceramic piece is in the style of Luca della Robbia.



The Kitchen The millwork was in place when Liotus and her partner, David Crampton-Barden, found the apartment, as was the grass-cloth wallcovering in the living room.



The Work Area “We found the desk at an antiques shop online. I found the bench at Ballard Designs, and I have an antique rug on top.”



The Bedroom “The chandelier was left in the apartment,” Liotus says. “I added the two antiques cherubs I found at an antiques shop in Pittsburgh.” The duvet cover was custom designed.



The Entrance The wrought-iron door with Venetian-style glass is original to the building. “The knocker with the dolphins was something we put in, in keeping with the Venetian design,” Liotus says.



The Courtyard Liotus and Crampton-Barden. Their 1925 building was designed with a courtyard garden, instead of a lobby entrance (a rarity in New York), that's planted with boxwoods and Japanese maples. The co-op's private dock was torn down for construction of the FDR Drive in the 1930s.

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