

# KELLY BEHUN BASICALLY CREATED AN ART MUSEUM IN THE CLOUDS FOR A MANHATTAN HOMEOWNER

*“I can’t decide where I want to sit and have coffee because it’s so nice,” the owner says.*

BY HILARIE M. SHEETS AND STYLED BY MICHAEL REYNOLDS PUBLISHED: FEB 12, 2024

**W**hen a pair of Miami art collectors bought a pied-à-terre on the 53rd floor of a Manhattan skyscraper, they wanted a home where they could reside among their works—including pieces by Andy Warhol, Salvador Dalí, and Alex Katz—without feeling as though they were inhabiting a museum. They turned to ELLE DECOR A-List Titan [Kelly Behun](#) to fashion comfortable interiors around their striking collection.





Thomas Loof

The tapestry in the foyer is by El Anatsui. The console is by Benoit Viaene, the Francesco Decio benches are from the Future Perfect, the pendants are by the Urban Electric Co., and the ceramic bowl is by Adrienne Fierman.

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“Art, for me, lives in its own lane, and that is not about decorating,” says Behun, who never puts an artwork in the service of a design scheme. This approach made her an ideal collaborator for the collectors, who called their placement of works “a labor of love.” A case in point was a large-scale abstract canvas by Angel Otero that layers hard-edge shapes with organic foliage. The piece migrated to different spots in the great room before settling in visual conversation over a sculptural brass console by Vikram Goyal.

Known for her warm modernism, Behun in turn found the perfect client in the owner, who, like the designer, is from Pittsburgh. “She’s decisive, she’s adventurous, she has strong opinions about things,” Behun says. “But she’s not unwilling to consider other ways of thinking.”



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A Nick Cave *Soundsuit* sculpture stands in the great room by a custom wet bar in oak and Cristallo quartzite. The stool is by Maxime Boutillier, vase by Alice Gavalet, and custom hand-painted wallcovering by Porter Teleo.

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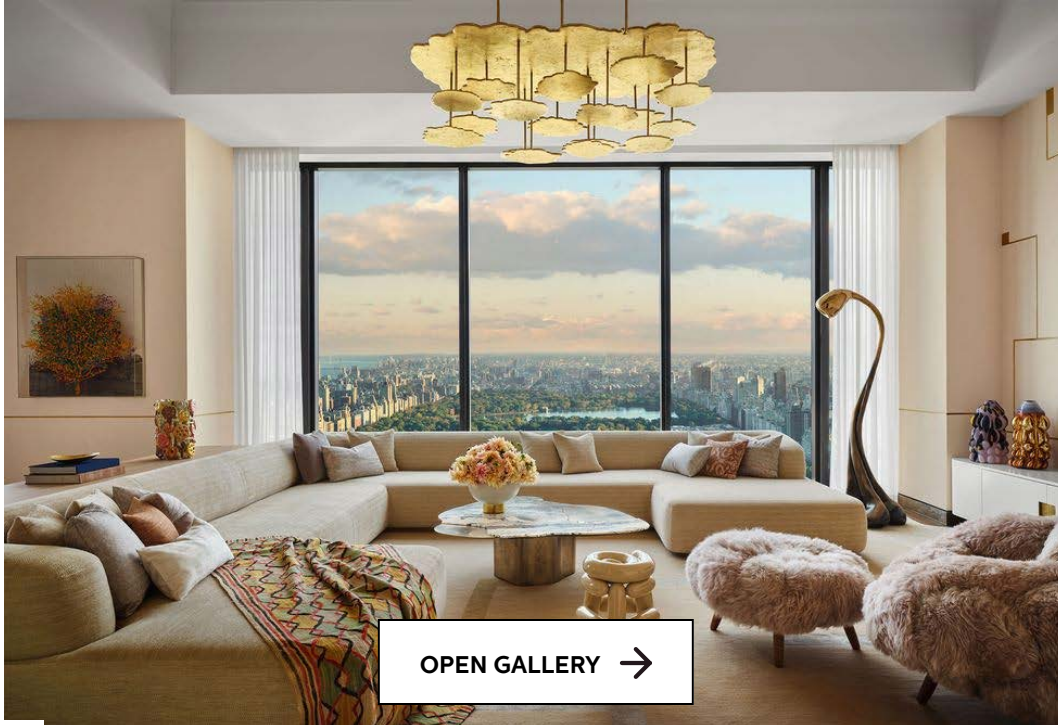
The collectors—who make frequent trips to New York to visit their two adult children—bought their 57th Street aerie in the

new supertall Steinway Tower, designed by SHoP Architects and connected to the landmark Steinway Hall. “You walk in and that view is spectacular,” the client says. The great room overlooks Central Park, while windows in the kitchen and bedrooms face downtown. “Everything else is kind of a backdrop,” the client says.

*“Art, for me, lives in its own lane, and that is not about decorating.” —Kelly Behun*

The first time she entered the apartment, she instinctively knew where to hang certain works. A Charles Gaines piece—an acrylic box encasing a gridded image of an autumnal tree, from his “Central Park” series—would go to the left of the great room’s panoramic windows. She also knew the central entry hall would be perfect for one of El Anatsui’s monumental tapestries stitched together from discarded metal bottle caps—and she hunted until she found just the right one. It now faces a small surreal portrait by Dalí of a woman encircled by a halo of clouds.

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MANHATTAN SUPERTALL*



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For the rest, the owner turned to Behun, who proposed a soft, neutral palette with lots of metallic touches and a mix of collectible and custom furniture designs. In the great room, a shimmery leafed-metal cloud chandelier by H el ene de Saint Lager is in lovely dialogue with the real clouds visible through the massive glass window that overlooks the park. Below the light is a biomorphic cocktail table by Vincenzo De Cotiis in veined marble and white bronze. "It's almost like a puddle underneath a rain cloud, with swirly colors and reflections," Behun says of the arrangement.



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In the guest bedroom, the sculptural stool is by Aaron Poritz. The chandelier is by BlueprThint Lighting, the custom bench is in a Cowtan & Tout fabric, the silk wallcovering is by Scalamandré, and the artwork is by Charles Gaines.

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The space also has a wraparound sofa where the owners like to lounge and watch television, when they are not gazing at passing planes and the dramatic vista out-side. Behun could have planted a dining table in the room, but the clients are more the type to have friends over for drinks and then head out to one of the city's great restaurants. So instead, she designed a curvaceous wet bar in white quartzite hand-painted with gold leaf. And of course there is world-class art, including a towering Nick Cave *Soundsuit* sculpture and, on the windowsill, a ceramic head by Simone Leigh.



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In the kitchen, custom plaster pendants hang above an island designed by Studio Sofield. The fittings are by Kallista, the stools by Mod Shop, and the sculpture by Jasmin Anoschkin.

In the kitchen, echoing the white island by Studio Sofield—which designed interior finishes throughout the building—Behun added a quartz bar as an informal place to eat. She topped it with a ceramic piece by Jasmin Anoschkin, its creaturelike silhouette contrasting with the midtown skyline. Another whimsical touch appears in the guest bedroom, where Aaron Poritz’s stool-cum-sculpture—it resembles a giant four-fingered hand—seems to be waving in front of a window overlooking the neighboring towers. It’s one of many inviting seats in the apartment, from the great room’s fur chair by the Campana Brothers (“It’s such a hug,” Behun enthuses) to Pierre Yovanovitch’s Papa Bear armchair in the primary bedroom. “Every morning I can’t decide where I want to sit and have coffee because it’s so nice in every room,” the owner says. “I’m so happy to be here.”



*This story originally appeared in the March 2024 issue of ELLE DECOR.* [SUBSCRIBE](#)

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