

# FULLY BOOKED

WITH HER KNACK FOR DISCOVERING TALENT, LITERARY AGENT LYNN NESBIT ENLISTS A YOUNG DESIGN FIRM TO UPDATE HER MANHATTAN APARTMENT

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gned by Courtney Coleman and Bill  
midt, the klismos-style chairs are by  
Burden, the 19th-century armchair is  
d the sphere sculpture is by Giorgio  
useppe Penone drawing is flanked by  
ry Italian sconces, the marble mantel is  
de, and the shades are of a Rogers &  
nen. **FACING PAGE:** The 19th-century  
e in the entry was found in Paris, the  
nter table is Chinese, and the Russian  
chair is upholstered in a cotton from  
& Fils; the artworks are by Gabriel  
d the walls are painted in Benjamin  
ostal Fog. See Resources.



Eleven years ago, when literary über-agent Lynn Nesbit was working with Rose Tarlow on the decorator's game-changing book, *The Private House*, she netted more than just her standard commission from the deal. She ended up with a pair of talented young designers to help her with her own recently acquired apartment—and a whole new take on what she wanted it to look like.

Nesbit's previous home was a combination of Gothic Revival, Victorian, Tudor, and Beaux Arts styles, and not a little crowded with objects. Sick of clutter and inspired by Tarlow's stringently edited interiors, the agent decided she wanted something calm and restrained. "Open" was the new mandate. "I could never have afforded Rose," Nesbit says, laughing. But her friend did offer to make a recommendation.

Enter Courtney Coleman and Bill Brockschmidt. Coleman had worked for designer David Easton and done some freelance projects for Tarlow. Not long after Nesbit got in touch, Coleman established a design firm with Brockschmidt. Trained as architects, they were the perfect team for the job. The new apartment—in a prewar Park Avenue building down the street from Nesbit's offices—was in serious need of renovation. "It had been decorated a long time ago by Parish-Hadley, so it still had some charming touches," Coleman says. But these weren't part of Nesbit's vision. "She wanted a clean, loftlike space."



To that end, Nesbit arranged for Coleman and Brockschmidt to visit the nearby apartment of fashion designer Bill Blass, whose spare and finely curated space had become something of a design-world shrine. "Everybody in our field was influenced by that apartment's sculptural take on furniture, how you could really see the art," Coleman says, adding that the taste and aesthetics of Tarlow and Blass were great influences on Nesbit's project. But there were other considerations as well.

Nesbit kept only a couple of pieces from her former space (including a tufted chair that once belonged to Gypsy Rose Lee), but the designers still had to find room for what Coleman calls "acres of books." Since Nesbit is renowned for her frequent dinner parties, ample space for entertaining was a must. The solution was to reconfigure the living room to create a library by day and party space by night. Floor-to-ceiling bookcases were installed. Two library tables were designed with extra leaves, so they could be transformed into a single table for 24, an idea inspired by Blass's pair of large Parsons tables.

"A big part of our work was figuring out the logistics of different types of parties," says Coleman. She and Brockschmidt designed airy brass table lamps that don't hinder conversation. In the powder room, the shower was transformed into a storage closet, where Nesbit stashes the chic green folding chairs she had commissioned in India while attending the wedding of the son of Knopf editor in chief Sonny Mehta.

Now, when guests arrive at Nesbit's home, they are ushered into a sitting room where drinks are poured at a bar housed in one of a pair of very Blass-like English museum cabinets. Afterward, when the



The shelving, ladder, and lamps in the library are custom made, the mahogany table is by Rose Tarlow Melrose House, and the chairs are English Regency. **FACING PAGE, FROM TOP:** In the sitting room, artworks by Joe Brainard and Lynn Davis flank a pair of English museum cabinets, and the chandelier is from the 1940s; French dining chairs upholstered in a Rogers & Goffigon linen surround a custom-made pedestal table, the cocktail table is by Roman Thomas, and the Swedish side table is from the '30s. The reception room contains a 19th-century Karelian secretary, a pair of English Regency armchairs from Niall Smith Antiques, and bronze garden stools; a French mirror hangs above a custom-made console, and the Khotan rug is antique. See Resources.





Each door is opened onto the elaborate library, transformed for the night into a banquet room, there is always, says Nesbit, a great "ha!" moment.

Nights in the library may be dramatic, but lightness and calm are the order of the day. Color consultant Eve Ashcraft developed a strié glaze that was applied to the walls, which were then sanded and waxed to a subtle sheen. The once dark floors were bleached on the advice of the architect. "It almost looks like old ivory," says Coleman.

The master bedroom is the perfect respite after an evening spent entertaining. The walls and headboard are covered in a Clarence House twill in Nesbit's favorite celadon-green and hung with photographs. The chic dressing table was designed by Coleman and Brockmuhl and made by the same artisan who made the folding chairs. Nesbit once signed up a young Michael Crichton as a client. He had interviewed a roster of more established agents, but he chose her, saying, "Let's grow up together." These days, she expresses an equally warm but slightly different sentiment toward Coleman and Brockmuhl, who, in a sense, have grown up with her. "They're decent and well-fashioned and lovely," she says. "I feel like they're my children." For their part, the designers love that it's an ongoing relationship. "We still go over and set up everything for the parties," Coleman says. "and we have so much fun doing it." ■



In the master bedroom, the headboard and vanity are custom made; the bed is dressed in Schweitzer linens, and the Italian bench is from the 1940s; the antique chairs are upholstered in a Brunswick & Fils linen, the photographs are by Lynn Davis, left, and Seton Smith, and the walls are covered in a Clarence House twill. **FACING PAGE:** The powder room's walls are sheathed in a Pierre Frey linen, the Urban Archaeology vanity has Waterworks fittings, and the French mirror is from the '40s; the vestibule is covered in an Adelphi wallpaper. See Resources.