



IT TAKES ONLY ABOUT 15 SECONDS in the apartment of Garry Jensen and Elena Bertinetto-Jensen to understand that doing business with them is, in fact, no ordinary business. Their loft in Manhattan's Garment District is everything you'd expect from a New Yorker: sleek, modern and sophisticated. Then again, it's quite a bit of what you wouldn't: jolts of bright color, and cheeky fusions of textures, shapes and contrasts. And it's 100 percent of what you might expect from Deeply Madly Living, the couple's online home décor boutique that specializes in "cool living for the wild at heart."

Objects in both home and showroom reflect the Jensens' eclectic design philosophy, "providing people with items that are unusual or original ... that will spice up their décor," says Elena, who herself spices up her wardrobe with chunky silver pieces that look more like museum artifacts than jewelry.

Spice, a word that frequently punctuates Garry's conversation, may be the driving aesthetic behind the store, but color and contrast are the organizing principles of their loft. Trained as a fresco artist in her native Italy, Elena is fearless about using hues unheard of in New York apartments, most of which trend toward monochrome interiors. While some walls are a subdued dark charcoal (a design coup pulled off only if you are blessed with 23 windows), others wear a shock of color: electric plum, fuchsia and vivid aqua.

Elsewhere in the loft are signs of a "fusion-ista" at work (or play). Purple velvet upholstery rescues a pair of Chesterfield chairs from their inherent sobriety. A lime and pink Warhol portrait of the Queen of Denmark—

a nod to Garry's heritage—hangs above framed family photos and an intricate metal-work cross. The crystal chandelier from Coco Chanel's Paris apartment tinkles seductively above a white parsons dining table, custom-designed and inlaid with an 18th-century marble Roman altar piece that requires four men to lift. Bright aqua modernist chairs line either side of the table, a visual surprise that makes you do a double-take until you realize, "wow, that's cool."

"This is what our main characteristic is—we don't choose just one style or color. We like to work with accents and things that we find interesting, which make us smile or get the imagination going," says Elena.

The Jensens seem to be a magnet for such things, finding them in tucked-away places, "dodgy markets" and at odd hours. They enjoy a running competition over who gets the best goods at the best price, and Garry clearly enjoys showing off his flea-market bargains with all the glee of a treasure-hunter striking gold. To wit: the coffee table, a glass-



Above :: Living room with Warhol

topped oval whose patina wrought-iron base was formerly a bed canopy holder, purchased for 250 pounds. Throughout the apartment, the most unusual items often are the least expensive, and the fusion of cultures and styles—say, a collection of antique European silver set off by the gleaming stainless-steel kitchen—gives the apartment its elegance as well as its eccentricity.

“We like things that make a statement and raise eyebrows,” Garry said. “We’re not afraid to be witty and irreverent, and just different.”

And it’s not just other’s people’s stuff that catches his eye: Garry also has a keen appreciation for overlooked art—something that seems to happen by accident rather than design. He’s scored works by Emile Bernard, Cesar Manrique and Pinchus Kremegne, artists not widely known outside of Europe. OK, there is that Picasso and the Warhols, but they get no more stature than the mystery painting from the Russian flea market. It’s this intuitive, not learned, sensibility that sets this couple apart and also glues them together.

Coming from good European stock, Elena and Garry are mutually rooted: they’re worldly, cultivated, multilingual.

He’s a former table-tennis champion; she’s a former pentathlon athlete on the Italian National Team. They finish each other’s sentences. They have tattoos of each other’s names.

As the daughter of an Italian diplomat, Elena, 41, traveled the world, changing homes and cultures every two or so years. After graduating from the Lycee Francais Chateaubriand de Rome, she earned a degree in financial regulation and economic policies. She put her financial career on hold to travel as a trompe d’oeil artist, restoring antique wall and ceiling paintings in villas throughout Europe. Although her early globe-trotting influenced her sensibilities, it was the experience of working in these domestic still lifes that formed Elena’s color and design aesthetic.

“In the antique villas, under the patina of time, you’d have these strong colors and contrasts,” she says. “It’s something that throughout the years has been forgotten. But 500, 400, 300 years ago, they were crazy—quite daring,” she says.

Crazy and daring are two words one might also use for Garry, 46, a self-described “bad boy.” The son of an architect, he apprenticed to a Danish bank at age 15—his father had moved to the

Canary Islands to build his dream house—beginning a long career in the high-pressure world of international finance. His work took him to London, Moscow and New York, and in 2002, he traded his suits for flip-flops, retiring to Lanzarote, the most easterly of the Canary Islands, where he took on the renovation of a 150-year-old finca. It was the same year he met Elena on a plane from London to Rome, after which, life on the island wasn’t the same for the hard-charging executive.

“I quickly realized that for someone who spends his time in the office, living in a town with 300 residents in the Canaries was just not for me,” he said. When he did leave, three years later, it was to return to investment banking in New York City—this time with Elena as his wife.

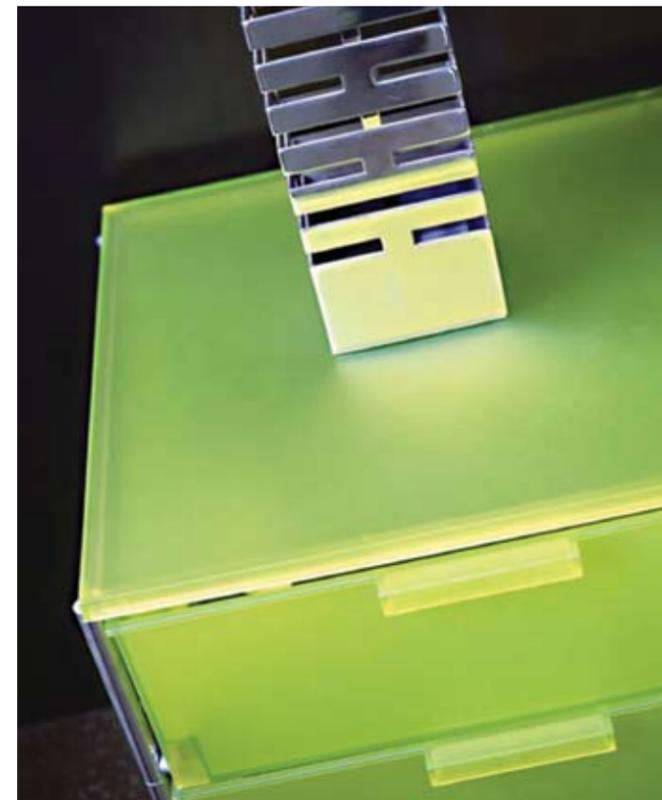
After a brief stint in corporate housing—a memory that still causes Elena to shudder—they found their Garment District loft: 3,200 square feet in a former button factory. They paid \$2.6 million for the semi-finished space. Design firm Workshop/apd, already on site for renovations, was retained for the job, guided closely by the exacting tastes of the apartment’s new owners.

In keeping with the Jensens’ shared philosophy, the apartment contains many



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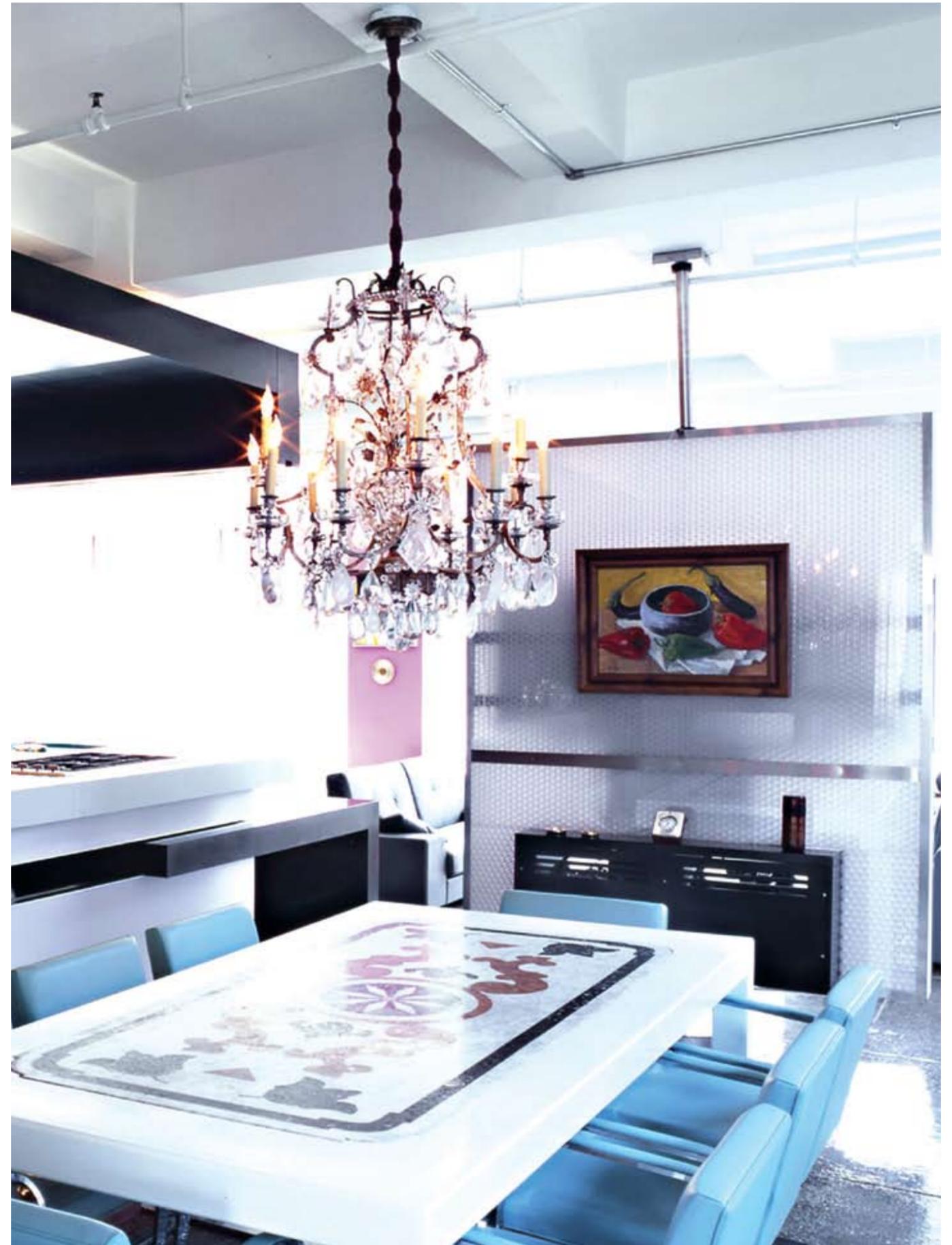
- GARRY JENSEN



Top :: Celebrity Lamp
Left :: Neon dresser
Right :: Master bedroom



Left to Right :: Garry, Gellila, Elena



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design winks. This is a couple that not only likes to transform; they like things that transform. A blocky parson's style table pulls out from a polished-concrete kitchen counter to create a new dining surface. Translucent screens roll out from side pockets to conceal the kitchen. And, in perhaps the most unusual transformation, two bedrooms become three, aided by a pull-away wall between the master and guest rooms—a feature that will come in handy when Gellila, their recently adopted daughter, moves into her own room. Even the free-standing entertainment center is dual purpose: one side is a hi-definition television and the other is a backdrop for the Manrique painting. It revolves so that while dining, you may either watch TV or look at art.

In 2007, they had the house, the job, but not the bedside table and lamps. A frustrating search on both the internet and in the city for their objects of desire led to the Deeply Madly Living brainchild, a one-stop shop for people who aspire to coolness, but don't have the time or know-how to source unusual home accents.

"We wanted to get away from the typical white-on-white mentality of New Yorkers," says Garry. "We ourselves have been influenced by design all throughout our lives and, as such, can make design decisions ourselves."

So, in the spirit of "if you build it, they will come," Garry quit investment banking for the second time, and the couple launched their virtual store in November last year. Populating the site with quality items is no small undertaking. The Jensens travel about four months of the year, seeking emerging designers across the globe and sourcing manufacturers that meet their high production standards. After all, if you're going to sell a lamp made of vintage aviator sunglasses for \$1,600, you don't want just anyone putting it together.

Just as they're not shy about getting a bargain, they're not shy, either, about placing a premium on their merchandise. The highly graphic Erotika Chair, an asymmetric Victorian spool on sex and money, retails for \$4,700. The Swedish Zero Gravity wing chair—made of a single bent-wood sheath and NASA-certified memory foam that conforms to your body—is a cool \$14,400. And if all this coolness is too much, wrap yourself in the Rex chinchilla throw for another \$4,650.

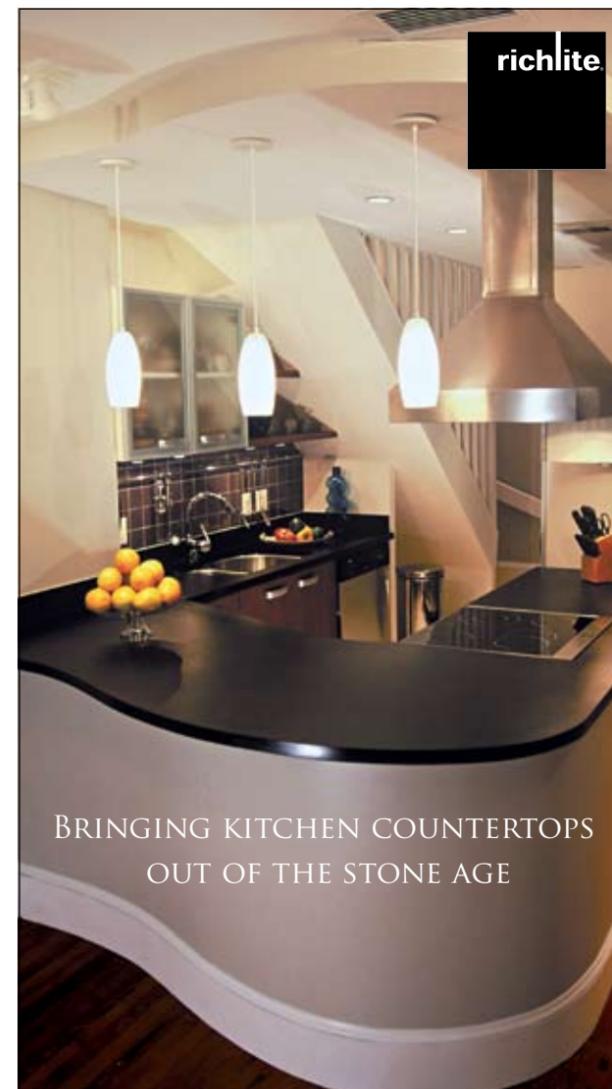
"We're not saying take all our stuff and decorate your home with it," says Garry. "But take a couple of pieces and spice up your living space. It takes so little to turn it into something cool."

So, who buys this stuff? A rapper bought the Erotika chair. A biker went for the engine coffee table (a little Victorian number made of tooled leather adorned with studded brass knuckles and a vintage carburetor, \$4,900). A high-end hotel is interested in the Celebrity sunglasses lamp for all its rooms. Other than that, it's your typical 20-to-40-year old with a vibe. And an appreciation for off-beat wit.

Though still in its fledgling stages, the site is rapidly gaining ground on the Internet with an average of 10,000 hits a month, thanks to viral marketing. Design blogs have made the site their darling, picking up on crazy and cool things like the faucet wall lights and hanging bud vases made of condoms. Even the Erotika Chair—admittedly, a hard sell—has not gone unnoticed. And the Celebrity lamp had a pre-production waiting list and is the company's iconic best-seller.

"Everyone has their own style—we don't force anything. We're not worried about people being scandalized; it's the whole idea that some people will like it, some won't," says Elena. "But, they'll definitely notice it." 

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