

Portraits of Rooms

MAY 14, 2021



PIERRE BERGIAN, *Living Room of Mario Buatta, 120 East 80th Street, New York (2020)*.

The heavily layered apartment of Mario Buatta is perhaps the best example of the decorator's philosophy of "the collected interior". Here Buatta glazed the original wood paneled library of the 1931 townhouse originally built for George and Martha Whitney by architects Cross and Cross in a lettuce green and hung rows of dog portraits from decorative blue bows, a playful riff on collecting historical portraits, often joking these were his ancestors.

SOCIAL DIARY • BY: **DAVID PATRICK COLUMBIA**



Friday, May 14, 2021. A warm and sunny day, yesterday in New York. 70 degrees, said the weatherman with a Real Feel of 73. Perfect. The city is just moving along out of its isolation and this perfect weather is good for the spirit.

Friday is often our “decorator” — or HOUSE — day on the Diary. And this week we planned to do something on **Pierre Bergian**, an artist of interiors whose work “Portraits of Rooms” is on exhibit (and sale) at **Emily Eerdmans’** gallery through Friday, May 28th.

How do the very rich spend their money? Well, you know, the house, the car, maybe the yacht, the private plane, the interiors, and the art. It does make a difference in your abode, the art.

Pierre Bergian knows far more about it than you or I because it’s his business. The exhibition at Eerdmans is a collection of more than 20 new paintings of iconic interiors by the Belgian artist. The idea for the show was conceived after Emily saw Pierre’s drawing he posted on Instagram on her way to the **Mario Buatta** Auction at Sotheby’s last January.



An exhibition view of *Pierre Bergian: Portraits of Rooms* at Eerdmans Fine Art.

In *Portraits of Rooms*, Bergian depicts a selection of interiors from the pantheon of 20th century design, from Tony Duquette's *Dawnridge* in Beverly Hills to Karl Lagerfeld's Paris apartment. I was never in Lagerfeld's apartment but I used to go to Duquette's annual New Year's Day lunch at the house that he created. It was like no other, before or since. It was a piece of art, a play, a movie, a story. The child in Tony grew up but the imagination he lived out all his life. The house is still there and available for tours. An early "apprenticeship" (of the imagination) with Lady Mendl taught him the "how." It's an example of what could only be created in Hollywood, America.



The show is running through May 28th with viewings by appointment in the newly expanded gallery.

Among the collection are rooms of our friend (many people's friend) **Mario Buatta**. Discussing today's Diary with JH reminded of an interview **Sian Ballen** and **Lesley Hauge** did with Mario almost ten years ago. Mario was in his full feathered prime. He was an enormously successful interior decorator

for he was a real artist. He was also a real comedian. I always thought he should do a standup in Las Vegas because he was very funny. He didn't so much tell jokes but instead act out his funny stuff, often visually oriented.

For that reason, along with the Diary we are re-running **their interview** with Mario. Mario was a collector and also what used to be called a pack rat. Or what today is called a hoarder. Amazing stuff he hoarded, it is true – and on top of that he had massive amount of storage items elsewhere. He couldn't help it. He was a serious artist about his work, but he was a devotee of his would be career. Also an art. And funny. I laughed all the way through the interview. He was a master. And good for a laugh, too.



PIERRE BERGIAN, *Living Room of Mario Buatta II, 120 East 80th Street, New York* (2020).

Buatta lived in the apartment from 1976 until his death in 2018, constantly adding to its collections.

\$5,500.00



PIERRE BERGIAN, *Drawing Room of Jayne Wrightsman, 820 Fifth Avenue, New York* (2020).

While Jayne Wrightman's taste was universally recognized as exquisite—she was a peerless collector and long served as a trustee at the Metropolitan Museum of Art—the society grande dame and philanthropist chose to work with Parisian decorators Maison Jansen upon acquiring her palatial Fifth Avenue home. In fact, Jansen had already started; the apartment's previous owner, private dealer Renée de Becker, had brought them in. Wrightsman and husband Charles continued with Jansen; upon principal Stephane Boudin's death, they began working with Henri Samuel, thus beginning a long association. While the bones of the room owe much to Jansen, the decoration—the colors, the upholstery, and most of the furnishings—are Samuel. Shown here is the sprawling 31-foot-by-21-foot drawing room, its intricately carved boiserie acquired from stately European homes.

\$6,250.00



PIERRE BERGIAN, *Corridor Néoclassique of Jayne Wrightsman, 820 Fifth Avenue, New York* (2020).

Shown here is the formal gallery, a 46-by-12-foot corridor appointed with Old Master paintings, important European furniture, and shelves of rare books.

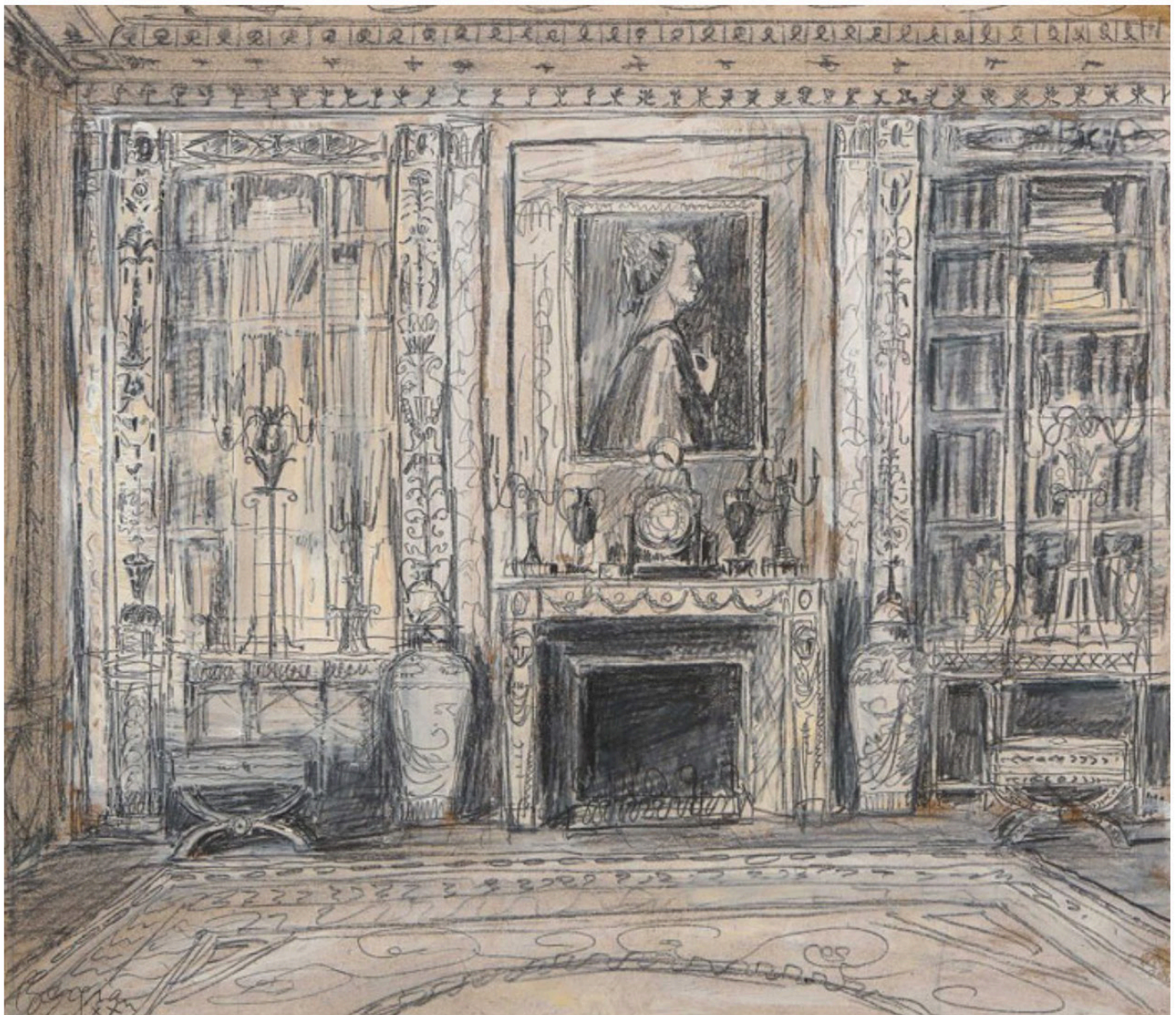
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PIERRE BERGIAN, *Living Room of Kenneth Jay Lane, 23 Park Avenue, New York* (2020).

From a two-bedroom apartment in a Stanford White-designed mansion on Park Avenue, larger-than-life jewelry designer and Manhattan society fixture Kenneth Jay Lane (1932–2017) entertained social royalty like Diana Vreeland and Diane von Furstenberg (not to mention actual royalty). His 26-foot cube of a living room, shown here, featured innumerable Orientalist paintings, which he'd often lend to the Metropolitan Museum, hung on walls clad in chocolate-brown synthetic car upholstery fabric—a choice whose thriftiness befit a designer of costume jewelry.

\$5,500.00



PIERRE BERGIAN, *Dining Room of Howard Slatkin, 1215 Fifth Avenue, New York* (2020).

It took interior designer Howard Slatkin 33 months to recreate an 18th century European palace in an Upper East Side co-op. Set on the 14th floor of the Brisbane House and overlooking Central Park, Slatkin's masterpiece was endlessly embellished, plaster ceiling to monogrammed seat cushion, its rooms variously Czarist, Orientalist, Italian. The dining room here was inspired by Raphael's Loggia at the Vatican, with the bookcases encircled by painted panels and Scagliola marble pilasters. In 2015, his work complete and a monograph published, Slatkin put the property on the market.

\$4,800.00



PIERRE BERGIAN, *Living Room of Tony Duquette, 1354 Dawnridge Drive, Los Angeles* (2020).

American decorator Tony Duquette's exuberant vision was most fully expressed in his Beverly Hills retreat, known as Dawnridge, where he lived with his wife Elizabeth (known as "Beegle") from 1949 until his death in 1999. The property, now maintained by Duquette's longtime business partner, interior designer Hutton Wilkinson, was described in the pages of *Architectural Digest* as "Space Age Baroque." Its appeal endures, apparently: in recent years Dawnridge has served as the setting for such affairs as the television series "Ratched" and a Gucci ad campaign.

\$5,500.00
