



# Wow Factor

Glamour meets function in a young family's imaginative Tribeca loft.

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Interior Design: Rajni Alex, Rajni Alex Design Home Builder: Richard Dobrzanski, RDM Renovation





When it comes to putting together an interior, no detail is too inconsequential where Rajni Alex is concerned. The designer doesn't just subscribe to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's "God is in the details" dictum, she fiercely embraces it. Consider the prewar loft she recently renovated in Tribeca. Her clients, a couple with a young son, initially wanted to paint, redo the main bathroom and bring some definition to the space. During her walk-through, Alex took note of the existing layout and abundant light and promptly suggested "kicking things up a notch" with a complete renovation. "The apartment had immense potential," she recalls. "It was just a matter of carving it out in a way that made sense for their lifestyle."

In a home that's sophisticated yet perfectly suited to a busy family with a toddler, Alex has judiciously sprinkled one-of-a-kind moments like the moody elevator vestibule, the sculptural brass-based table near the entrance and the hand-carved floating console in the dining room. But the apartment never feels precious, and no space is off-limits. Pointing to the curvy ottoman in the foyer, Alex says, "That's performance velvet, so even if their child climbs on it with sticky fingers, you can just dab it clean with a wet paper towel. My kids are older now, but I remember that stage. Performance fabrics have come a long way."

But before she could attend to decorative details, Alex knew she first had to bring order to the interiors. This meant designing steel-and-brass screens to help define the foyer, replacing an ill-conceived wood accent wall in the living room with a formal fireplace and transforming the main bathroom into a serene oasis. Meanwhile, the existing open concept kitchen inspired her to go for bold. "I told the clients, 'Let's have fun with it. No disrespect to white kitchens—I've had one for a long time,'" Alex adds, "but if you're going to have an open space, make it a showstopper." In turn, the original island was

shifted to give the adjacent dining area some breathing room, while a combination of ebony cabinetry and Calacatta marble infused the space with high-contrast punch.

General contractor Richard Dobrzanski proved to be an invaluable collaborator. In addition to fabricating the kitchen's burnished-brass hood, he crafted the apartment's myriad fluted wood details and brought symmetry to the existing columns in the main rooms. He also worked closely with Alex to get the stain just right on the floors. "It might seem like the smallest detail, but it took us a month to land on the right color," she explains. "Richard is a rare breed. He respects me and my attention to detail, and I respect him for delivering what my team and I strive for—perfection."

Aided by designers Jessica Gallardo and Ashley Tortorella, Alex deployed the apartment's singular elements with restraint. "A lot of thought goes into selecting pieces," she says. "It's like composing an outfit: You can wear the most beautiful dress, earrings and necklace, but they shouldn't compete with one other. It's the same with putting a room together. You want to be mindful of using lovely things and placing them so they're not all trying to claim your attention at once." In an open-plan layout, giving individual pieces their due can be tricky, but Alex made sure to size up the furniture and lighting from every angle. "We needed each space to have its own purpose without creating walls," she explains. "But we wanted to be sure the details were beautiful from every vantage point."

In contrast to the home's mostly neutral palette, Alex injected a vibrant dose of color into the powder room, which features a hand-painted green wallpaper accented with gold veining, a Cipollino marble vanity and jewelry-like lighting. "People walk in and they're like, 'Wow, wow, wow,' until they've exhausted all their wows," Alex notes.

But even in its most glamorous moments, the designer never forgot that this is, at heart, a family home. "We always think of longevity," she says. "What's now the playroom can become a media room just by changing the styling. You can do something luxurious and chic that's usable and functional at the same time." ■



Rajni Alex designed blackened-steel dividers to bring definition to the foyer of a loft she recently renovated in Tribeca. Featuring a sculptural polished-brass base, a table from Elan Atelier joins stools by Kelly Wearstler covered in a Holly Hunt fabric, while a frosted-glass light from Apparatus hangs above. The custom cowhide rug is by Kyle Bunting.





**Above:** Alex arranged the expansive living room into separate seating areas. In one, a new fireplace surround and an antique mirror from Mirror Home are set against a fluted wall treatment crafted by RDM Renovation. A Rogers & Goffigon fabric covers lounge chairs by Vanguard Furniture.

**Opposite:** Coffee tables from Theodore Alexander with an onyx finish and a carpet from The Rug Company inspired by Calacatta marble add an organic note. The CR Laine sofa is upholstered in a mohair-silk blend by Holly Hunt.







**Above:** Alex transformed the kitchen into a dramatic space with Calacatta marble, ebony oak cabinetry and a custom metal hood. "I didn't want it to be too shiny," she says. "It had to catch your eye, but without competing with the light fixture in the dining area." The corners of the island echo fluted details elsewhere. A Jim Thompson fabric covers the Interlude Home counter stools.

**Opposite:** Chairs by Michael Trent Coates surround a table from Bradley USA in the dining area, where a photo by Petros Koublis is displayed above a hand-carved floating console by Simon Johns. The chandelier is by Lindsey Adelman Studio. "Our clients have very modern taste, so we kept this area simple with a couple of pieces that add a touch of edginess," explains Alex.





**Left:** Contrasting with the home's low-key palette, the powder room shimmers with green, thanks to a hand-painted wallpaper by Porter Teleo and a floating vanity of Cipollino marble. "The wallpaper and that marble were made for each other," says Alex. Antique brass talons accent the mirror by Barry Dixon for Arteriors. The hand-blown chandelier is by Hammerton Studio.

**Opposite:** To play with contrast in the office, Alex painted the trim a dark hue and chose an ebony rug bound in leather, as well as a wallcovering from Drop It Modern. The brass shelving unit from Vanguard Furniture continues the theme, as does the husband's existing desk, which she refreshed with a coat of lacquer and a new glass top.







**Above:** In what was once the main bedroom's office, the team moved walls to create a dressing area and closet. A bouclé fabric from EJ Victor covers the Kelly Wearstler ottoman. The sconce is from Visual Comfort and the photograph beyond is by Lisa Eryn of TheseFineWalls.

**Opposite:** Alex kept the mood serene in the main bedroom with a hand-gilded wallpaper from Fromental, whose motif is inspired by Chinese mountain landscapes and scholars' rocks. "There's no art over the bed because that would be a crime against the wallpaper," Alex quips. The Vanguard Furniture bed features a tufted headboard in a performance velvet by Shelli Breidenbach.

