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Books and conversations  
beckon in the lounge, with  
the oversized Flexform  
sectional warmed by  
textured neutrals.







# ORBITAL **AXIS**

A creative couple's vibrant art collection is the nucleus of John Beckmann's modernist vision

The roughness of concrete frames a serene Kadar Brock painting, softened by B&B Italia's inviting JJ rocker.



TEXT KATE MISSINE PHOTOGRAPHY DURSTON SAYLOR INTERIOR DESIGN AXIS MUNDI DESIGN



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hen it comes to interiors, artwork is all too often relegated to an accent, an element of decor used to merely highlight or enhance an existing space.

However, for art-savvy power couple Michael Berkeley and Karine Haimo, a dynamic trove of painting, sculpture and photography sought the right environment no less than they did – one they found in an airy loft in a landmarked Bond Street building and converted into an understated showcase that still feels like home.

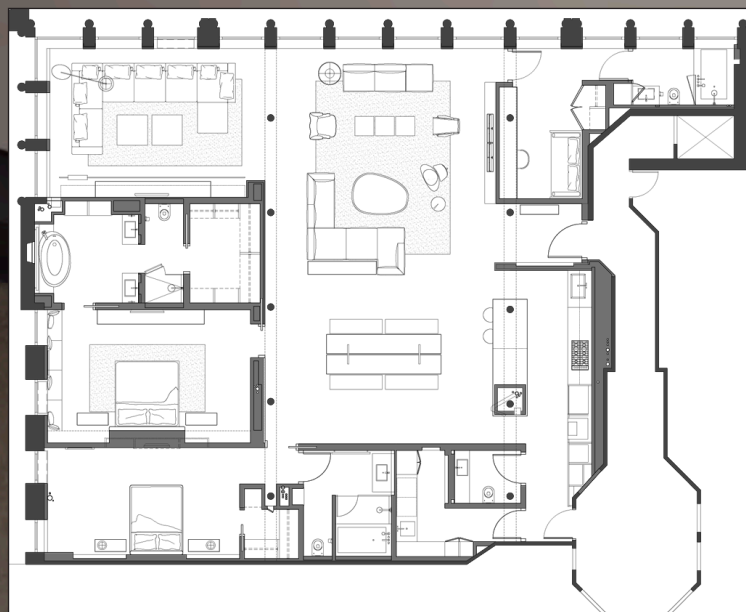
“We needed a space large enough to accommodate the artwork, and we wanted the emphasis to be on the art, not the furnishings,” shares Berkeley, whose growing collection gravitates toward energetic, modern abstraction. “We’re drawn to younger, emerging artists, mostly under 40. We are not rigid about their criteria, however, and we hung two seascape photographs by Hiroshi Sugimoto in the master bath.”

The apartment holds an interesting history. A Stephen Hatch design circa 1870, the building housed a watch case manufacturer and a prominent publishing house before being converted into residences in 1987. The unit itself underwent extensive renovation for famous rock musician Mike Rutherford, whom lived in it just a couple of nights before deciding his tour schedule wouldn’t permit him to enjoy it.

“We were instantly taken with it,” says Berkeley. “We just needed help making it a more livable space.”

That’s where John Beckmann of Axis Mundi Design came in with his punchy modernist vision.

“They wanted a minimalist contemporary backdrop,” explains Beckmann, “a neutral palette that wouldn’t distract from the artwork, and a strong sense of home.”



**Floor planning:** The loft’s vast space gets sectioned off into several smaller zones for a more intimate feel.

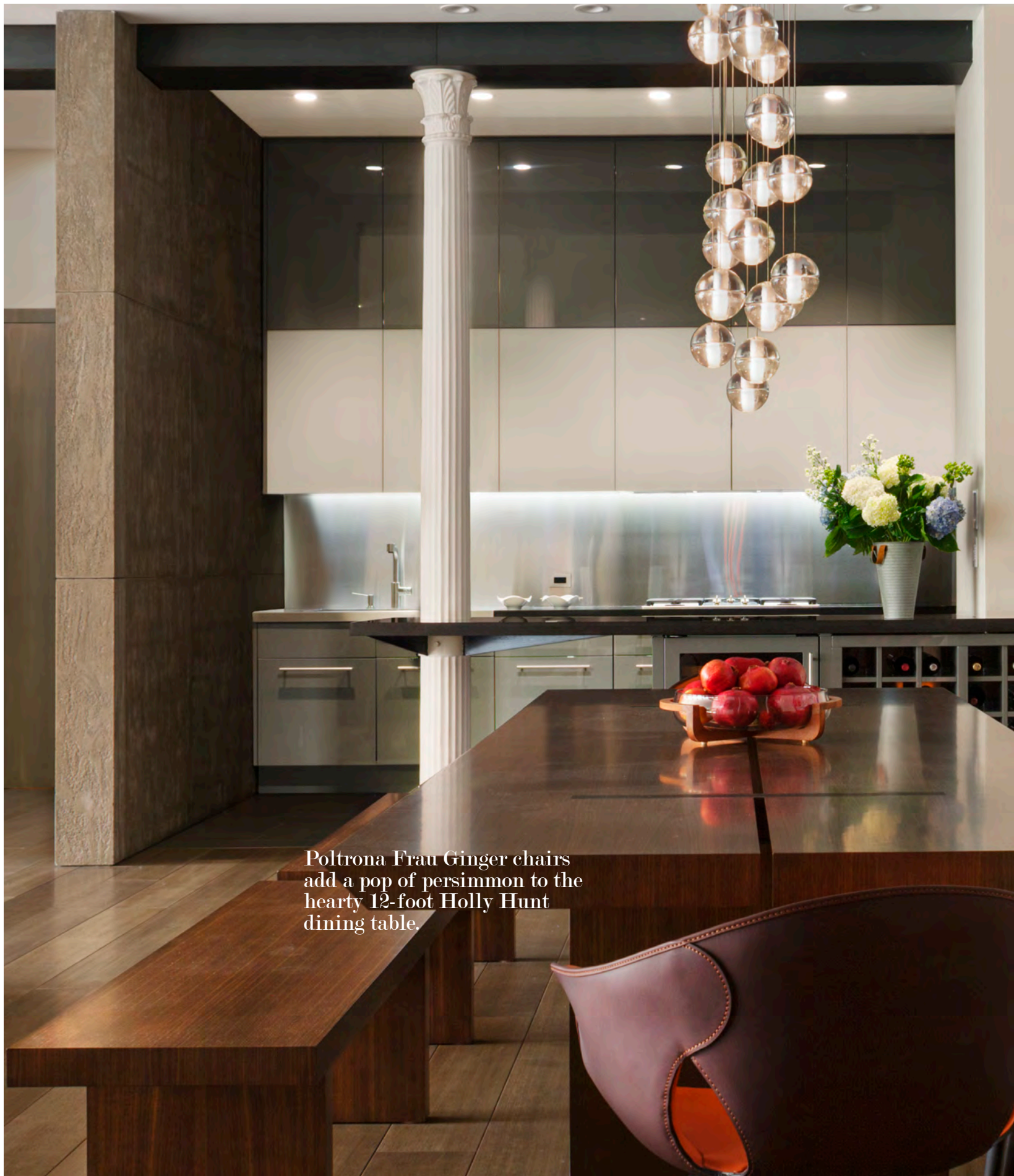






A trio of Glasitalia Alice tables and B&B Italia Michel sofas lay low, accenting the height of Curry's totemic sculpture and original cast-iron columns. A mustard yellow Metropolitan swivel lends graphic contrast to artistic shades of grey.





Poltrona Frau Ginger chairs  
add a pop of persimmon to the  
hearty 12-foot Holly Hunt  
dining table.





In the living area, a totemic sculpture by Aaron Curry rises dramatically to ceiling height in vertical contrast to the sleek, low-profile sofas. A fluid white marble table and muted grays in the upholstery echo the black-and-white impact of a captivating mirror painting by Adam Pendleton and a Sam Moyer abstraction, punched up with Beckmann's signature pops of color – vibrant turquoise pillows and a mod canary yellow swivel – for graphic effect.

"The biggest challenge was achieving some sense of scale," recalls Beckmann. "It's a colossal space that could easily feel cavernous and empty."

To break up the loft's sprawling 3,400 square feet, Beckmann devised a "two-pronged approach," sectioning off smaller areas while generously proportioned furniture worked to fill the expansive footage. In a library nook, cozying up against a window-lined corner, a cream sectional invites drawn-out discussions. Leather tables, wood shelving, a shag carpet and a Mongolian sheepskin layer in an interplay of touchable texture.

"Large pieces of furniture had to be subdued and minimal," Berkeley comments, "and we wanted John to play with textures – furs, leather, marble – so that some warmth would also come through."

A bold graffiti piece by Eddie Martinez faces the 12-foot dining table, massive yet clean-edged so as not to compete with the painting's pop. Saddle leather scoop chairs peek out in juicy Hermes-like orange, and an effervescent cast-glass bubble chandelier catches the art's playful mood.

In a nod to the past, concrete walls and trims of graphite and polished steel in the kitchen and bathrooms allude to "the industrial character of the building," Beckmann describes. A touch of roughness is carried over to the master bedroom, where a scratch-coat wall is glammed up with polished metallics and high-gloss finishes, heightening the surrealism of a Jung Lee photograph. Throughout the home, original cast iron columns remind of a bygone classicism, "contextual, and really quite beautiful, very elegant," Beckmann adds. ■



A bubbly Bocci chandelier plays with the lighthearted burst of bold-colored graffiti art.