

Chez Suzanne

East Village, New York

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When the gallerist Suzanne Demisch places her lens on a space she doesn't just see ways to furnish it—she sees the chance to discover a narrative. Suzanne's work reflects her fascination with the passing of time, through objects that convey a sense of the lives they've led, with a taste that skews to the unconventional and the rare—pieces that were formed more so out of creative expression than simply function. That approach is intuitive, but always academic, with an ever sharp focus on provenance and pedigree.

When Demisch went looking for a home, she sought a space steeped in the history of post-war New York that was befitting her own modernist touch. Here, in the East Village, she found exactly what she was looking for: a place seemingly lost to time. The apartment had been owned by the photographer and painter, Saul Leiter, for more than a half century, and appeared to have been spared from the frantic development of the city around it.

While *Demisch Danant*, the legendary design gallery she cofounded alongside Stephane Danant, has been celebrated for curating exhibitions of exceedingly high precision, her apartment is imbued with the warmth of a family home. Where one might imagine objets d'art chosen for their status, one finds an interior appointed for function and ease that is highly personal. If Demisch's home is her story, it is one that conveys the thoughtfulness of the found and hand-touched. What is made imminently clear is that her choices are inward, each an emblem of the kind of real connoisseurship one gains from a life well-lived.





A RENE GABRIEL CHAIR OCCUPIES THE SPACE IN FRONT OF SUZANNE'S CHILDHOOD PIANO. A COLLECTION OF SENTIMENTAL PIECES AND ARTWORKS, FEATURING STONEWARE BY RAOUL LACHENAL ON THE LEFT, AND A TEXTILE CREATION BY MARLOWE DEMISCH ENHANCE THE SETTING. OPPOSITE PAGE: SHEILA HICKS, SILK BAS-RELIEF FROM 1976.



THE LIVING ROOM IS CENTERED AROUND A TRIANGULAR FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT COFFEE TABLE, ACQUIRED AT A FLEA MARKET OVER 17 YEARS AGO. THE PINK SOFA WAS INSPIRED BY AN INTERIOR IN BEIRUT. COMPLETING THE ENSEMBLE ARE INDONESIAN IKAT PILLOWS AND A VINTAGE TAPESTRY WHICH COVERS AN ANTIQUE BASKET FROM NEW ENGLAND, SERVING AS A LAMP SHADE.



DRAWN FROM A VISIT TO POMPEII, THE BLACK PLASTER WALLS INTRODUCE AN OLD-WORLD CHARM. THIS DRAMATIC BACKDROP SERVES AS A STRIKING CONTRAST, DISPLAYING A LINEN ARTWORK BY SHEILA HICKS AND BRONZE INTERCOM.



ON THE BEDROOM MANTEL RESTS A GATHERING OF ROCKS, COLLECTED DURING A TRIP TO PATMOS, GREECE. OPPOSITE PAGE: FURNITURE PIECES FROM 19TH-CENTURY NEW ENGLAND, INCLUDING A CHAIR AND CABINET OCCUPY THE SPACE. ILLUMINATING THE CORNER IS A TABLE LAMP DESIGNED BY DAVID CRESSEY, AND AN ARTWORK BY SHEILA HICKS.

LAUREN DAVIS BRITVAN: Your home formerly belonged to the late photographer and painter, Saul Leiter. May you share how you came to live in a place with such a rich and layered provenance?

SUZANNE DEMISCH: I first came to NYC in 1993 from Cape Cod and landed in the East Village, closer to Tompkins Square Park. I really loved walking through the neighborhood and was particularly interested in 10th Street between 2nd and 3rd. It held such history. When I went to look to buy an apartment in 2000, there was a studio available on that block and I bought it, eventually renovating it in 2006. The unit next to mine was Saul Leiter's, and when he passed in 2013, I ended up buying it one year later.

LDB: Would you say this space has informed an evolution in your taste or preferences for certain objects or design elements?

SD: In some form, the building itself holds such weight. Originally built in 1854 and renovated in the 1940s, it has been home to artists ever since. I knew I didn't want to change the

architecture and historical background, but I wanted to find a way to blend my personal collection with the space.

LDB: Is there a room in your home that you feel cannot be fully captured by a photograph alone?

SD: My bedroom. The doors, window frame, and baseboards have the original paint from Saul that I had hand-cleaned during construction. The cream has such a texture that the light from the large windows emphasizes it in a mesmerizing way.

LDB: How do you envision this space evolving in the future? Are there any particular elements you hope to explore further?

SD: In truth - no. I am content where the space is at now and I don't see any future evolutions.

LDB: When you were first starting out, how did you learn to assess, whether it be value or attribution, the pieces you were sourcing?

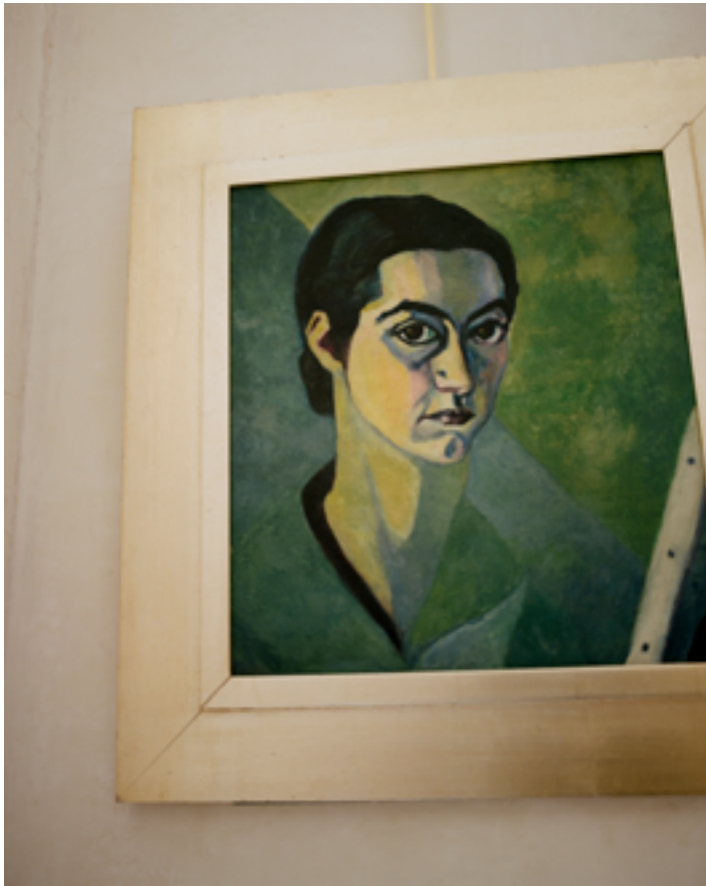
SD: I really learned to just trust my intuition. I paid little attention to the actual value of a piece and instead focused on my own eye and taste.





A 'BOULES' SCULPTURE BY SHEILA HICKS. OPPOSITE PAGE: OPEN
SHELVING IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM DISPLAYS A COLLECTION OF
MARKET BASKETS FROM NEW ENGLAND. SEEN ALSO AN ARTWORK
BY DONALD BRYANT & THREADED SHELLS FROM TODOS SANTO,
MEXICO





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1. IN THE DINING ROOM, AN ISAMU NOGUCHI CEILING PENDANT LIVES MODESTLY OVER AN OAK TABLE IMPORTED FROM BELGIUM. SURROUNDING THE TABLE ARE AN ECLECTIC COLLECTION OF 19TH-CENTURY AMERICAN CHAIRS SOURCED FROM UPSTATE, NEW YORK. A TOUCH OF NATURAL BEAUTY IS ADDED WITH A CERAMIC PITCHER FILLED WITH CORNFLOWERS RESTING ON A PLACEMAT FROM THE BEREA COLLEGE STUDENT CRAFT PROGRAM. 2. SUZANNE'S UNIFORM, THE GAZELLE SNEAKERS BY ADIDAS. 3. MERCEDES MATTER, 'SELF PORTRAIT', 1929 OIL ON CANVAS. 4. A CHRISTMAS PRESENT FROM SUZANNE'S SON MARLOWE DEMISCH, A WOVEN ARTWORK INSPIRED BY THE BELOVED ARTIST SHEILA HICKS.



AN ASSORTMENT OF PLANTS GREET VISITORS, POSITIONED TO ENJOY THE VIEW OF THE CO-OP'S REAR GARDEN. THE AMBIANCE IS ILLUMINATED BY EXPANSIVE WINDOWS, A 1940S INNOVATION DESIGNED TO INFUSE MORE LIGHT INTO ARTIST LOFTS DURING THAT ERA. PREVIOUS PAGE: A SHEILA HICKS BOULES FINDS ITS PLACE ON A CHAIR CRAFTED FROM STEEL, WOOD AND LEATHER BY CLAUDE LALANNE, WITH THE DISTINCTIVE IMPRINT "CL 84".

LDB: Do you find that your approach to collecting now follows any formal criteria?

SD: No - I stick to trusting my intuition and personal taste.

LDB: When you start with a project— whether it be curating an exhibition, working for a client or your own personal space—are there specific elements that you decide upon initially, to set the tone for your decisions moving forward?

SD: I usually focus my attention on the project itself first - the location, context of the space, any stand out architectural notes and the client's collections. Each project has its own narrative, and I believe in taking the time to fully grasp it. Understanding my clients' feelings and interests is as important as well. It allows me to bring their essence into the space. This process naturally shapes the narrative, and guides my search for inspiration. Currently, I am working on a project that allows me to explore Bauhaus principles, as the style is reflected in both the architecture of the space and the client's preferences.

LDB: What is your approach to incorporating color in a space? Do you ever struggle to part with certain pieces?

SD: I try to emphasize light, and the materials I use, and adding hints of nature - I love plants. If a piece does not work in the space, it is not meant to be. It will have a home somewhere else.

LDB: What is something recently that has rekindled a passion of yours?

SD: Lately, I've found inspiration in Maria Pergay and the concept of blending modern pieces with historical spaces. Demisch Danant recently participated in TEFAF Maastricht, presenting our booth titled "A Modern Dialogue with the Past: Tribute to Galerie Maison et Jardin, Paris 1968." Maison et Jardin was an early supporter of Maria Pergay's stainless steel works, showcasing them alongside antique furnishings and tapestries. This blending of styles and eras has been a focal point for Stephane and I throughout our curation at Demisch Danant. Maria Pergay's adept integration of historical decorative arts with contemporary furnishings has brought spaces to life and has rekindled this passion of mine to do the same.

LDB: You founded Demisch Danant in 2005. How did it happen, meeting Stephane and deciding to start the gallery together?

SD: I met Stephane in 1999 at a Paris Flea market. We were both dealers and ended up driving around all of Europe for five years to see and source pieces. We realized there was a gap in the representation of French post-war design and that's when we decided to open the gallery in 2005.

LDB: Has the proliferation of online marketplaces made your work at the gallery simpler or more challenging?

SD: A bit of both. On one hand, having an online marketplace allows for more options - you can now source a piece from anywhere in the world. It has created a platform for global collectors through websites and social media. Personally, I even receive notifications on my phone for certain designers and discover pieces I've never seen before. However, it's still preferable to see the work in person. Being able to pay attention to the details, condition, and rarity is essential when buying a piece, and it's much easier to do this in person.

LDB: What led to your decision to start publishing books?

SD: I was inspired by the many books I referenced personally and decided to give it a try myself. I published my first book in 2006 about Maria Pergay, investing over 4 years of research into its creation. To learn and study about someone for such an extended period, then presenting them in my own space, made the book that much more meaningful to me.



A SIGNED LITHOGRAPH BY CESAR, DATING 1976, TAKES PRIDE OF PLACE. AN ASSEMBLAGE OF ARTWORKS RANGING FROM SHEILA HICKS, TO A CERAMIC CUP BY MAGDALENA SUAREZ-FRIMKESS, AND A DISTINCTIVE WOOD VESSEL. NOTEWORTHY IS THE MARIA PERGAY SILVER-BELTED BOX, A GIFT FROM THE ARTIST IN 2004 FOLLOWING SUZANNE AND MARIA'S MEETING.

THESE TREASURES FIND THEIR HOME ON A MARIA PERGAY ONE-OF-A-KIND PROTOTYPE, THE 'DRAPE' CABINET, SKILLFULLY CRAFTED FROM STAINLESS STEEL, EBONY MACASSAR, AND PALM WOOD. THIS PIECE MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THE DESIGNER'S COLLABORATION WITH DEMISCH DANANT GALLERY IN 2005.

NOT TO BE OVERLOOKED IS THE LAMPSHADE, ACQUIRED FOR A MERE \$10 AT A YARD SALE, CHOSEN FOR ITS ENCHANTING BUTTERFLY PATTERN.

Your space will remain timeless if you keep it a reflection of your own taste.



IN THE BEDROOM, LINENS SOURCED FROM TANGIER, MOROCCO. A HAND-EMBOSSSED COPPER "BELLS" SIDE TABLE, FINISHED IN AUBERGINE LACQUER BY RONAN AND ERWAN BOUROULLEC, GRACES THE LEFT SIDE. ON THE RIGHT, AN ANTIQUE 19TH-CENTURY AMERICAN SIDE TABLE COMPLEMENTS A NAVAJO RUG.



A STONEWARE 'VASE' MOUSE BY VASSIL IVANOFF, ACQUIRED FROM GALERIE ANNE SOPHIE DUVAL C. 1957-60. ACCOMPANYING IT, IS A WOODEN TRAY BY ALEXANDRE NOLL, ON A POLISHED STEEL COFFEE TABLE BY MARIA PERGAY FROM 1970, AND A 19TH CENTURY NAVAJO RUG, CREATING A HARMONIOUS BLEND OF ART AND HISTORY.



A 2021 WOOD TABLE CRAFTED BY MINNESOTA-BASED JONATHAN MUECKE STANDS ALONGSIDE A 1956 UPHOLSTERED SOFA BY FRENCH DESIGNER JACQUES DUMOND. WHILE AN ARTWORK BY CESAR RESTS ON THE WALL.



A FRAMED FIBER WEAVING BY SHEILA HICKS. OPPOSITE PAGE:
EXPOSED 19TH-CENTURY WIDE PLANK WOOD FLOORS, HAVE BEEN
ENHANCED WITH A WHITE FINISH APPLIED BY DEMISCH.





LEFT: A LA BORNE TABLE LAMP, TOPPED WITH A 1970S SHADE, RESTS ATOP A VINTAGE JAPANESE ZOKIN MAT WITH SASHIKO HAND-STITCHING. THIS INTRICATE TEXTILE IS JUST ONE EXAMPLE OF THE MANY CLOTH TREASURES WOVEN INTO THE HOME.



RIGHT: A STEAM PIPE ADORNED WITH ROPE, REMINISCENT OF A NOTORIOUS FEATURE IN OLDER NEW YORK APARTMENTS.

OPPOSITE PAGE: SUSPENDED FROM THE CEILING IS AN ISAMU NOGUCHI AKARI PENDANT, AND A SINGLE PIERRE PAULIN F675 CHAIR FROM 1963. UNEARTHED IN HOLLAND DURING A EUROPEAN ROAD TRIP IN THE LATE 1990'S, THIS CHAIR MARKED SUZANNE'S INTRODUCTION TO THE WORLD OF THE RENOWNED DESIGNER.

LDB: Which historical eras are you predominantly exploring and intrigued by?

SD: The French post-war era still holds so many undiscovered talents. Although we emphasize works in the gallery from the late 1950s through the 1970s, by artists such as Joseph-André Motte and Jacques Dumond, there is still so much more to research. Currently I am exploring Sheila Hick's earlier works, specifically the prayer rugs and her engagement with architectural ideas.

LDB: What guidance would you offer someone interested in venturing into the world of collecting, dealing or curating?

SD: Always trust your own intuition and taste. At the end of the day you are the best judge and if you carry that knowledge with you throughout your career, you'll have success.

LDB: Are there any common mistakes you observe people making when decorating their own spaces?

SD: I notice many people decorating their spaces with a specific era in mind or trying to replicate someone else's style. Your space will remain timeless if you keep it a reflection of your own taste.

