

Words **Kate Bussmann**
 Photographs **Christopher Lane**



When interior designers George Yabu and Glenn Pushelberg first saw their New York home, they were looking for “a little pied-à-terre”. At 4,000sqft, with floor-to-ceiling views of the Hudson river, this wasn’t that, but it was irresistible. It didn’t hurt that the building was designed by star architect Richard Meier, nor that its location was the leafy West Village, or that it came with some pretty famous upstairs neighbours.

“Nicole Kidman’s got a floor and Hugh Jackman and Calvin Klein have got three floors each,” says Pushelberg. “We haven’t seen Hugh or Nicole yet, but Calvin says hello in the lobby. And Heather Mills is in the other building...” The couple exchange a mischievous look. “We hosted a benefit and asked everyone in our building, but it’s a two-building condominium and the other side got upset because they weren’t invited. It was Heather Mills that instigated it. We were like, ‘OK! You can come!’”

They stumbled on the apartment four years ago. A friend, the chef Jean-Georges, owned one in the building and showed them the last unoccupied floor. “It was a raw space – no interior walls, just a concrete floor and ceiling,” remembers Yabu. “In New York, and being designers, that’s a truly special opportunity.”

To say they paid \$2.5m for it as “kind of an impulse buy” (and it’s one of four properties they own) gives a measure of the success of their luxury design business, Yabu Pushelberg. They may not be household names, but their talents are highly sought after in the fashion and hotel worlds: they’ve done interiors for department stores Bergdorf Goodman in ▶

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“It was a raw space – no interior walls, just a concrete floor and ceiling”: (left) the modernist building, designed by ‘starchitect’ Richard Meier, is one of the most desired addresses in Manhattan and neighbours include Nicole Kidman, Hugh Jackman and Heather Mills. Main picture: the vast living/dining space is filled with collectables, including Yabu and Pushelberg’s most valuable piece, the 1970s Italian brass-and-wool sculptural chair (far right) by Simon Gavina. The two sofas were designed by Yabu and a rare splash of colour comes from the Yves Klein table which is filled with bright-blue powder pigment



◀ New York, Lane Crawford in Hong Kong and Printemps in Paris; VIP salons for Louis Vuitton stores; and current projects include the flagship Park Hyatt in New York, the Wall Street Four Seasons, Edition Honolulu (the first of Ian Schrager's new hotel chain) and a country home for the leader of a world superpower.

Both born and raised in Toronto, they met in design school in the 1970s, and became a couple after they began sharing a studio. Today, Yabu takes the lion's share of the design work, while Pushelberg travels the world courting clients.

"Almost every piece of furniture here was found on our travels," says Yabu of their museum-worthy collection. "We always say to people, 'Take us where you go, not where you think we should go,' so we end up at interesting galleries and junk shops. Nothing was predetermined in this apartment in terms of furniture – it's just what we love."

There's a story behind everything in the three bedroom, three-and-a-half bathroom space, emphasising their perfectionism and expertise. The Travertine floor was relaid three times before they were satisfied. The hallway walls were panelled in dark laurel cut



Stag night: (from left) the head encased in acrylic marbles is by Kohei Nawa. "We didn't realise there was a real taxidermy head underneath – it actually freaked us out," says Yabu. The master bedroom has a large photo by Wilhelm Moser, and the adjoining bathroom (above) has an extra-deep Japanese tub. "It's great if you're an exhibitionist," says Pushelberg.

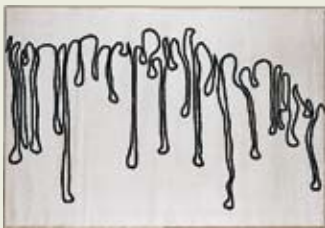
from a single tree and left unvarnished to absorb light so your eyes adjust before entering the bright rooms off it. "It makes you slow down and relax – we're interested in how emotions are tweaked when you come into an interior," says Pushelberg.

But as they show you round, what comes through strongest is their puppyish enthusiasm, such as when Pushelberg launches himself on to the cushioned platform sofa in the tiny TV room to demonstrate how comfy it is. And they have good reason to be in high spirits. In November they publish their first book, *Yabu Pushelberg* (Architecture Interiors Press).

Although property prices have fallen dramatically in Manhattan, the couple insist they have "no regrets" about buying this space. "There's long-term value, especially for buildings of this quality." And, of course, the neighbours add a little value of their own.

"Our doormen are not discreet," says Pushelberg. "You ask, 'What's the weirdest thing you've seen?' And they'll tell you what Calvin did in the elevator one night." "Isn't that terrible?" says Yabu, and they burst into laughter.★

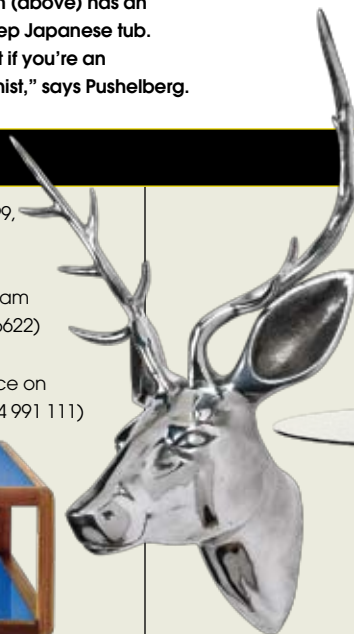
How to buy... Yabu Pushelberg's style



◀ **Hulda Vilse rug** £24.99, Ikea (www.ikea.com)

▶ **Stag head** £75, Graham and Green (0845 130 6622)

▼ **Vise dining table** price on request, Habitat (08444 991 111)



▼ **Opal occasional table** £595, by Frank, from Heal's (www.heals.co.uk)



▲ **Esther mirror** £150, Laura Ashley (0871 983 5999)