

A Collection of Cultures

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Nadine Homann beamed with a wide, inviting smile when she greeted me at the entryway to her second-floor apartment on 36th Street in Astoria. Originally from Germany, Homann has made Astoria her home for over 15 years now – and she still lives in her very first apartment.

Once she completed her thesis on interior architecture and furniture design back in Europe, Homann made the move to work with a large commercial architecture firm on Wall Street. She only knew one person in the city, but she was drawn by its energy.

"It's a melting pot of everything," she said about New York and Astoria, specifically. "I guess that's probably why I liked it."

Over the years she has worked at a handful of successful firms, taking on

high-profile clients such as Goldman Sachs, Deloitte & Touche and CNN. But in the commercial world, Homann felt she couldn't express her love for personalizing a space, so she started her own company, NH Design Studios. Her company specializes in residential interior design, decorating high-end apartments for locals in New York City and homes in the Hamptons.

"My passion is to visualize other people's dreams," Homann said. "I'm here to inspire. That's always been my passion."



Photos courtesy of Nadine Homann



Gigi Salon



Photos courtesy of Madeline Homann



Her designs have a sleek and elegant feel, and she takes care to find pieces that are timeless. But the designer doesn't claim to have one singular "style." "I really feel that every client is so unique; it needs to fit to them," Homann said.

When working with clients, she'll first talk to them in depth about their lifestyle and wish list, then draw from the conversation to bring a vision to life.

But some of her first projects were close to home: Astoria's own Gigi Salon (34-17 30th Ave.) and romantic wine bar DiWine (41-15 31st Ave.).

"Gigi Salon was my baby," the designer said. "But both of them are very interesting design-wise. Both of these projects were really recycled, 'reimagined' projects."

Homann's designs for each space contain elements of recycled materials – like repurposed wood or abandoned items leftover from demolitions. Gigi Salon even donates their hair clippings to Clean Wave, a company that recycles clippings to help soak up major oil spills.

Homann's own apartment represents her diverse background and passion for charity. Stepping into her

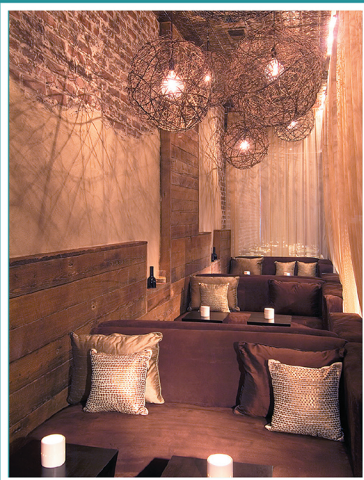
well-lit home feels like entering a museum. Colorful artwork hangs on almost every wall, and knickknacks from her travels rest on tables and shelves. Her home reflects the "melting pot" quality of New York that drew her here in the first place.

The first thing guests see is a large circular rug in the entryway. Homann, while not religious, is very spiritual and finds symbolism in many things. The circle symbolizes unity and makes for a peaceful entrance. A knee-high Buddha statue sits beside it, surrounded by two plants and a tall mirror – simple and calming.

Turn the corner and the living space is long, packed with interesting art and furniture. On the day I visited, there were tall, pink tulips in a vase on the white living room table – fitting, since it was International Women's Day, as she reminded me. They also effortlessly complemented the pink, blue and grey abstract art on the wall above.

"Art, as you can see, is my happy place," Homann said. "I have it everywhere. Some people are scared of art; they don't know what to do with it. There's nothing to do; just look at it!"

DiWine



A 3-D piece hangs on a wall nearby. It's constructed from reels of photo film rolled up into beautiful designs. "This one's about all the stories we have that we don't expose," Homann explained.

Perhaps the most striking element is a collection of statues and relics from her and her husband's travels. Her husband, Tarun, is from India, so the couple travels often to visit family and to feed their wanderlust. There are collections of Buddhas, candles, beads and even a statue that once belonged to Homann's grandmother.

On the far left of the display there are rows of beakers filled with water. This honors a charity Homann and her husband set up when they married in 2010 called "Gift of Water," a project aimed at creating safe water sources in villages throughout East India.

In lieu of gifts at their 2010 wedding in Germany, they asked guests to donate to this newly established fund.

"Everyone had to travel, it's a lot of expenses, and I don't need another toaster. I just want people to be there to have a good time," Homann said. "So I told my husband – I had just come back from a polio vaccination trip in India – 'We have to do something with



Photos courtesy of Nadine Homann

water." And Gift of Water was born and still continues to this day.

So far, they've successfully established 14 wells – represented by the 14 beakers on display in their apartment – and the couple visits often to check up on the villages.

Turn away from the impressive display and you'll spot event more mementos from their travels: a tall wooden African statue, a pipe and more art. An indoor plant stands tall in the corner – it's hard to miss as it looks like it's been pulled from the jungle, but it somehow ties the room together.

Along with art, light is also very important to Homann. While the spacious windows offer ample natural light, Homann has had to improvise with the light fixtures as only a skilled interior designer could. There are three large lights on the ceiling in the living room, all beginning from the same solo fixture in the middle of the ceiling, swooping out like tentacles to hit all areas of the room.

The space is truly a designer's dream, combining her signature sleek style with personal mementos.

"My home is like all my inspiration," Homann said with a smile.