

INTROSPECTIVE MAGAZINE

Amy Lau Teams Up with Makers to Create Heirlooms of the Future

The Manhattan-based decorator commissions statement-making custom pieces from artisans and furniture designers to adorn her clients' homes.

By: Fred A. Bernstein
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Designer Amy Lau doesn't like to be pigeonholed. One of New York's most celebrated interior designers, she has long been noted for her smart use of mid-century modern pieces. But that's hardly her only area of expertise. She often works with furnishings from the early 20th century as well as the 21st. A friend and patron of some of the most accomplished contemporary makers, she does more than just acquire their work for her clients — she also collaborates with them to create custom pieces. For the makers, she notes, "it's an opportunity to do what they've always dreamed of doing." Lau's clients, meanwhile, end up with one-of-a-kind items. "These are the heirlooms of the future," she says. "And if I've chosen well, some of them may end up in museums."

Here are the stories of four of her most memorable collaborations.



Interior designer Amy Lau (above left) often collaborates with makers, such as the late Vladimir Kagan (above right), on custom pieces for clients' homes (portrait courtesy of Amy Lau Design). At top are the results of four collaborations: from left, an entryway table by Michael Coffey, (photo by Bjorn Wallander), a rug by Hechizoo, a room divider by Silas Scandel and a double-sided sofa by Kagan (photos by Thomas Loof).

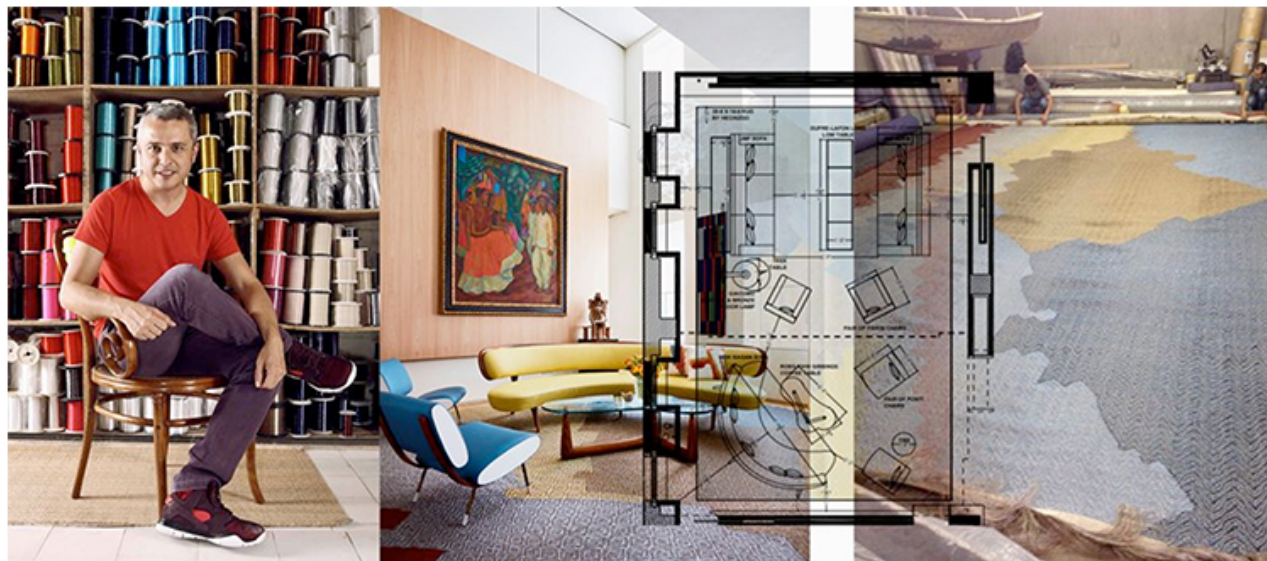


The palette of an Upper East Side home's living room rug — on which Lau worked closely with Hedizoo artist Jorge Lizarazo, based in Colombia and represented in New York by Cristina Grajales Gallery — was inspired by the hues of the artworks by Roberto Matta and Wifredo Lam displayed on the walls. The furniture includes pieces by T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings, the Haas Brothers, Jean-Michel Frank and Ico Parisi. Photo by Thomas Loof

A Rug by Hedizoo

A couple with an outstanding collection of Latin American art tasked Lau with designing their Upper East Side apartment, in whose living room they planned to display a large surrealist painting by Roberto Matta plus two smaller works, by Wifredo Lam and Diego Rivera. Lau and her clients decided to commission a rug that, she says, would “complement but not overpower” the art. She turned to Colombian artist Jorge Lizarazo, who established Hedizoo Textiles in Bogota in 2000 and is repped in New York by Cristina Grajales. Trained as an architect (and a veteran of the offices of Santiago Calatrava and Massimiliano Fuksas), Lizarazo is a self-taught weaver who often incorporates gold, silver and copper fibers into his rugs. He describes his pieces, which have the power to alter how spaces are perceived, as “soft architecture.”

At the Louvre Abu Dhabi, a new exhibition tries to chart some of the conflicting — and often still-evolving — interpretations of luxury that have emerged over 10 millennia. The show, “10,000 Years of Luxury,” was produced in partnership with the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and curated by that museum’s director, Olivier Gabet.



The rug that Lau and Lizarazo (left) came up with took over a year to weave and more than 12 people to install. Incorporating several miles' worth of copper-, gold- and silver-covered wire, it weighs several tons. The carpet's color blocks were adjusted to suit the arrangement of the furniture. In the living room (center) a pair of Giò Ponti lounge chairs and a large painting by Diego Rivera complement the rug's rich hues. Photos courtesy of Amy Lau Design

Lau and Lizarazo worked to create an asymmetrical color-block design based on the palette of the three paintings, adjusting the blocks as she created a furniture arrangement for the room. The various expanses of color became settings for some of the key pieces, including rare blue-and-white Giò Ponti lounge chairs. "I needed to see how the colors read in relation to each piece of furniture," says Lau. At the last minute, the pair decided against their original plan of edging the rug in a single color and instead created borders consistent with the adjacent color blocks. Incorporating miles of copper-, gold- and silver-covered wire, the rug, which took more than a year to weave, weighs several tons and required more than a dozen people to install.