

Game



Sue Bird (left) and Megan Rapinoe in the dining room of their modern pied-à-terre, which was designed by Mark Grattan, in Manhattan's SoHo neighborhood. Wallcovering by Élitis; artwork by Xavier Kelley.

OPPOSITE: In the living room, the sofa, which is upholstered in a linen by Dedar and leather by Milton Sokol, the cocktail table, and the mirror are all custom by Mark Grattan. Rug by Hechizoo Textiles. For details, see Resources.

Changer



Mark Grattan crafts a bold retreat for two globe-trotting sports superstars come home to nest.

By Katherine Bernard Photographs by Kelly Marshall Styled by Tessa Watson

n 2021, Sue Bird and Megan Rapinoe, one of the most decorated power couples in sports, found themselves in pursuit of a new kind of ornamentation: the interior design of their first home purchased together. For the former WNBA guard and the reigning U.S. Women's National Team champion, the winning tip came from Rapinoe's stylist, Karla Welch, who put her on to ELLE DECOR A-List designer Mark Grattan.

Rapinoe slid humbly into Grattan's Instagram DMs: "My fiancée and I just got a place in SoHo and need HALP!" The place in question was a 1,650-square-foot, two-bedroom pied-à-terre with high ceilings, sweeping views onto the city, and a rooftop terrace to boot. "New York is a really special place to both of us," Rapinoe says. "Sue is from here. It feels like the place where we fell in love—it feels like home in so many ways." Grattan was charmed by the soccer star's effusion of emojis. "I typically let people sweat a little bit," he says. This time, he responded the same day.

Grattan knew he'd need "HALP!" with the project, his first residential design commission outside his own Mexico City home. (That apartment, in a Luis Barragán–designed building, was on ELLE DECOR's April 2021 cover.) To that end, he brought on friend and frequent collaborator Chloe Pollack-Robbins, of Curious Yellow Design, to manage the job and keep things progressing on an admittedly compressed timeline. "I'm more of a storyteller," Grattan says. "Chloe understands my glitches, my triggers, my mess. It was very easy to go into this with her."

Rapinoe and Bird were traveling constantly throughout the process, primarily living at their home in Seattle. When they were present, they recognized the strong teamwork at hand. "Athletes and artists aren't that different," Bird says. "There is a process. And you can't skip steps, you just can't."

The biggest undertaking was the open-plan kitchen, which Pollack-Robbins, while looking for utensils for take-out during a meeting early on, noticed was missing functional drawers. By the time the Brazilian quartzite was installed—a variation called Crystal Tiffany used for the countertops, backsplash, and a custom-built island—even the drawer pulls were bespoke.

A deep emerald statement ceiling makes the living area feel organically grand, like living under a spectacular leaf. An illuminated lilac, like the underside of a sunlit petal, was Grattan's unexpected choice for the home's transitional areas, the hallway to the private quarters and the stairwell leading up to the roof. Rapinoe was initially wary, but the palette, while hard to grasp in theory, is beautiful in execution. "I wanted to try a moment where it doesn't work on paper," Grattan says. "It works only in real life."

The project also allowed the designer the space, both literally and figuratively, to test new production methods.

He successfully fabricated and installed a freestanding bent mirror behind the living room's custom sectional sofa, a feat he'd been attempting for years. He also pulled in new processes from his work with Solange Knowles's creative firm Saint Heron, collaborating with the artist Quincy Ellis of Brooklyn-based Fracture Studio to develop a resin material for the base of the triangular-glass-topped dining table, offset by an orange velvet banquette with leather piping.

The minty monochrome primary bedroom features wall-to-wall carpeting of which the bespoke bed seems a piece, rendered in velvet and chrome and dressed in a bedspread made from fabric remnants of Grattan's upholstered stool collection for the gallerist Cristina Grajales. Built-in nightstands and another instance of mirrored wall offer discreet functionality and a sense of grandeur at scale. The en suite bathroom is a peaceful dual-showerhead sanctuary inspired by Grattan's recent travels in São Paulo, swathed in aqua-tinted Sicis mosaic tiles with floor-to-ceiling aluminum shades dressing the windows.

This apartment provides a homecoming for the couple in another important way: Bird retired from the WNBA in 2022, and Rapinoe announced in July that this year's Women's World Cup would be her last. Grattan's work sets the stage for this exciting new chapter in their lives. "Whenever I think about retirement and the future, I think about our friends and family sitting on the couch, sharing joy with each other," Rapinoe says.

Bird echoes the sentiment, nodding to their one nonnegotiable—to install a television in the living room where they can gather and watch live sports. For two of the world's greatest athletes, Grattan was game. ■



Interior designer Mark Grattan in the living room.



The kitchen countertops, backsplash, and custom island are in Brazilian quartzite. Barstools by Mario Bellini for Cassina; Rombini tiles in Glossy Brun by Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec for Mutina; fittings by Kohler.



LEFT: In the powder room, the wallcovering is by Élitis. Custom sink in red travertine; fittings by Studio Piet Boon for Cocoon. Vintage mirror, Fenestella.

BELOW: The stairwell to the roof terrace is painted in Benjamin Moore's Whisper Violet. Vintage cowhide stool; artwork by Xavier Kelley.

OPPOSITE: In the guest room-cum-office, the sofa is by Flemming Busk in a Dedar fabric. Rug from R & Company; vessel by Nur Ceramics.

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—Megan Rapinoe



In the primary bedroom, the bed, bedding, nightstand, and mirror are custom. Rug by Fabrica; oak armchair from R & Company; walls painted in Antique Jade by Benjamin Moore.



The primary bathroom's walls are covered in glass tiles by Sicis. Showerheads by Studio Piet Boon for Cocoon; vintage chair by F.A. Porsche for Ycami.

