

Athena Calderone, wearing a FFORME dress and Chanel jewelry, in the kitchen of her Tribeca home. The custom red-laquered island is topped with Kinnekulle red limestone. The herringbone floor is original and the pendant light dates to an earlier renovation of the space. Fashion styling by Erin Walsh. Art: John Kacere

MAGAZINE

Athena Calderone Takes Manhattan

After launching a thriving business that showcased her Instagram-famous Brooklyn town house, the EyeSwoon founder moves to a storied Tribeca apartment—and finds a new focus

By Sarah Medford, Photography by Rich Stapleton, Styled by Colin King

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Athena Calderone gets excited about parchment. She's big on silver leaf, and crazy for etched glass; niches are ongoing fixations, and figured stone is always a yes. In her last kitchen, she worked at a massive, nearly seven-foot-square island of Calacatta Paonazzo marble—ravishing, until she set her sights on something better. Now she has a monolith of dusky red Kinnekulle limestone to keep her company in the kitchen.

"I never thought I would get into hardware design," she says, glancing from her new countertop over to the burnished-nickel pulls on the double doors leading into her new living room. "But with that and everything else, I just felt like I was going to take this moment to expand myself in ways I'd never dreamed of."

That's saying something, because Calderone dreams big. The focus of her latest aspiration is the Manhattan apartment that she and her husband, Victor, a music producer and DJ, bought in 2023. After decades in Brooklyn, most recently in a much-emulated Greek Revival town house (*AD*, November 2018) where she nurtured a design business and the lifestyle site EyeSwoon, published two books, authored furniture and rug collections, and generally modeled an ideal life, she was ready for a change. (*The New York Times* titled its article on her move, "What Happens When You Get So Influential That You're Bored by Your Own Aesthetic?").



Looking from the living room into the kitchen's breakfast nook, where the apartment's original wood paneling was refinished by the Brownstone Boys.

Victor and their son, Jivan, were less enthusiastic. "The drama was that I finally convinced them to sell the perfect house and then we couldn't find anything else," admits Calderone, laughing. "And I just wanted to find a... I'm trying to think of the right word. I have high standards."

On seeing this apartment for the first time, Athena told Victor, "It felt like Gotham City, not Manhattan." They made an offer later that day. Their new place, a full floor in an august Tribeca building dating to the early 1900s, was originally the executive suite of the Borden condensed milk company, its prestige distilled in herringbone floors, 13-foot ceilings, and oak-paneled walls the color of chocolate syrup. After a residential conversion in the 1980s, it was acquired by the charismatic French architect Thierry Despont, whose historically agile public projects—freshening up the Statue of Liberty, renovating the Ritz Paris—bookended the au courant interiors he designed for Kelly and Calvin Klein, Oscar de la Renta, Bill Gates, and others. His apartment was a sepia-toned folly, with kitchen stools from a 1930s Italian motor yacht and a gridded-brass backsplash styled after the grill of a vintage Bugatti roadster.



Calderone, wearing a Diotima dress and Chanel jewelry, in front of the living room fireplace. Vintage French sconces flank a custom mirror. The rug is by Studio Athena Calderone with Colbourns.



Tuco, the family dog, sits on a a Calderone-designed sofa in the living room with an artwork by Suzanne Jackson on the back wall.

Art: Suzanne Jackson / Ortuzar, New York. © Suzanne Jackson. f. duranD.



Calderone's office is furnished with a vintage desk and a pair of chairs cushioned in a Prelle fabric, all purchased at auction. A painting by Ellen Siebers hangs on a wall covered in Calderone's Cadence for Calico Wallpaper. 1970s Jansen floor lamp; circa 1925 table lamp by Albert Cheuret; gueridon side table attributed to Jules Leleu. Art: Ellen Siebers / Andrew Dubow

Absent Despont's glamorous accoutrements, though, the Borden corporate blueprint resurfaced like a milk mustache. The hallways had bowling lane proportions, the bathrooms were tiny. Calderone debated bleaching the dark woodwork that had incensed her EyeSwoon posse from the get-go ("Why does it feel a bit like Joan Crawford's home circa the '30s in *Mommie Dearest*?" one commenter posted), but after a trip to Vienna and Adolf Loos's faultlessly pint-size American Bar there, she decided to embrace the darkness and stop worrying about tiny rooms. "I ended up finding the Brownstone Boys on Instagram, who refinished the woodwork beautifully at not that high a price," she says. "Where there's a will, there's a way."

With her friend Danielle Siggerud, an architect based in Copenhagen, Calderone and her team at Studio Athena Calderone made respectful updates to the swaggering floor plan. (Vazquez + Capps served as the local architect; Sacks and Co. Construction Management as the general contractor.) They transposed the kitchen and dining room to make the former lighter and larger and slipped a home office and Victor's music production studio into Despont's former library. "We massaged and really kind of juiced every last bit of square footage out of this space," she says proudly.



Son Jivan's bath features a mosaic floor of Petit Granit and Cream de Lyon from ABC Stone and lava stone walls. Art Deco ceiling light by Atelier Petitot; existing tub; Lefroy Brooks bath and shower fittings.

The two spent days roaming Villa Necchi Campiglio, the Milanese idyll built by Piero Portaluppi in 1935, which had been something of an epiphany for Calderone when she visited a few years earlier. Without Villa Necchi, she admits, she wouldn't have understood the apartment's potential—and how seductive a more formal way of life could be.

"I was so smitten by the datum line," she says, referring to the slender horizontal band that encircles many rooms at Villa Necchi and also her own home, making the ceiling above it appear to float. Padding down a hallway in billowing trousers and a cropped blouse, her personal datum line hovering somewhere between rib cage and belly button, Calderone touches the cool plaster walls above panels of a creamy limestone she first spotted in a Rome hotel lobby in 2024. Even now, she says, "I can pinpoint where I drew inspiration for every single design element or piece of furniture here," a globe-trotting list that culminated in 24 hours on the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express.

Encounters with some of the 20th century's most elevated examples of craft had a galvanizing effect on her, Calderone says. "I just dove down the rabbit hole." She partnered with Calico Wallpaper, Lowe Hardware, Colbourns carpets, and metal fabricators Amuneal to create particular details—some of the most gratifying work of her creative life, she says. The same goes for the furniture her young design studio created to augment her carefully chosen antiques.

Spellbound by the crisp geometries and attenuated lines of the Vienna Secession and Art Deco, Calderone built a collection centered on these periods, mostly by mining the European auction circuit online. Cheuret and Després, Pergay and Prouvé, Hoffmann and Printz and Leleu—all are represented. Under a polished plaster ceiling by Kamp Studios in the living room, she points out a circa 1900 ebonized Viennese desk, a Cible table by Jean Prouvé and Jules Leleu, and two Jacques Adnet armchairs in their original copper velvet, one of her very first acquisitions. Commanding the gallery just beyond is Maria Pergay's 1968 Flying Carpet daybed—an auction treasure that nearly soared out of sight.

Free of the Borden blueprint and Despont's beaux gestes, the apartment summons the elegance and self-discipline that define everything Calderone does, from the way she dresses to how she makes pastry to her adventures with decorative branches. It's tempting to think that in Manhattan, beneath the silvered halo of the Deco era, Calderone has finally found her light. But that would be to under-estimate her.

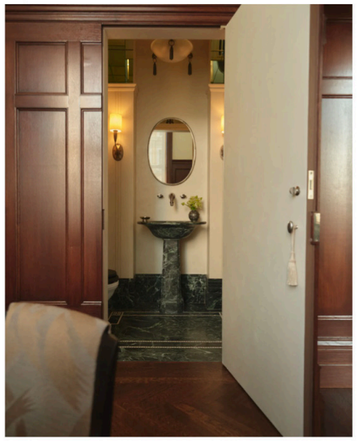
"Maybe this is the grown-up, more sophisticated, more educated version of myself," she muses, scanning the apartment. "Victor says it's the last one—but we'll see."



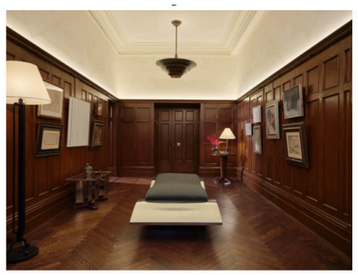
Calderone, wearing a FFORME dress and Chanel jewelry, in the living room. Furnishings include a sofa and coffee table, both prototypes by Studio Athena Calderone, and a pair of Art Deco wool velvet upholstered armchairs bought at auction. Tuco lies on a bespoke rug by Studio Athena Calderone with Colbourns. Curtains by The Shade Store. Art: Marc Cavell



In the kitchen, Art Deco sconces by Max Le Verrier hang above the JennAir Noir 48-inch professional-style range with grill in Smoke & Brass. The leaded glass doors were designed by Calderone and Amuneal using Bendheim glass. Island countertop of Kinnekulle red limestone from ABC Stone, fabricated by C&B Marble corp.; van Cronenburg sink fittings. On the back counter, a 1920 Primavera vase by Atelier d'Art du Printemps from Maison Gerard mingles with a Hans Hedberg red ceramic lidded box (also on the shelf) and glazed stoneware from Hostler Burrows.



Looking into the powder room, where a 1920s pendant light hands over a bespoke Verde Alpi pedestal sink. and sconces by Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann flank a 1940s Italian mirror.



A vintage Maria Pergay "Flying Carpet" daybed, reupholstered in Dedar's Adorabile Alpaca, takes center stage in the paneled gallery. The herringbone floor is original and the pendant light dates to an earlier renovation of the space.



Calderone, wearing an Heirlome top, trousers from the Frankie Shop, and Chanel jewelry, in her home office. She designed the custom rug in collaboration with Booth Art.



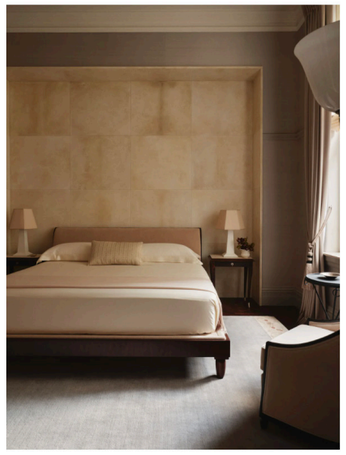
Custom-designed leaded glass doors by Studio Athena Calderone and Amuneal with Bendheim glass open to the living room from the gallery.



A 1930s mirror hangs above an Imperial sink with Lefroy Brooks fittings in a lava stone-clad guest bath. https://usa.lefroybrooks.com/



A 1920s chair from the SS Liberté stands next to an early-20th-century Viennese desk in the living room.



In the primary bedroom, a prototype bed by Studio Athena Calderone sits in a niche finished in a parchment-style lime plaster by Kamp Studios. Lamps by Nicolas Aubagnac with custom lampshades stand atop side tables by Wendy Stayman.



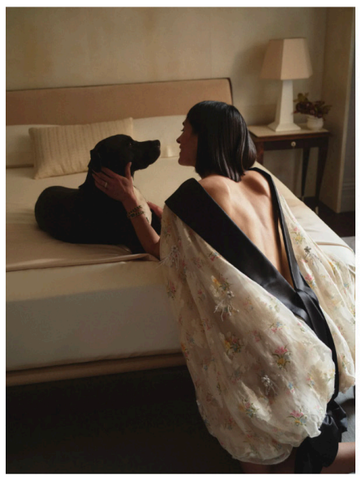
The media room is enveloped in panels of Dedar's Fanfara wall covering. The sofa, coffee table, and rug are all Calderone designs. Lacquer ceiling by GL Veneer; 1930s sconce by Jean Perzel.



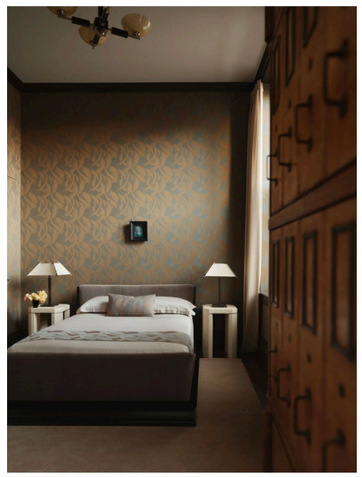
Victor, left, and Jivan Calderone in the music production studio.



The closet is wrapped in Calderone's Cadence for Calico Wallpaper.



Calderone, in a Dior dress and Chanel jewelry, with Tuco.



In son Jivan's room, a Jules Leleu bed upholstered in Dedar's Vladimiro is dressed in Sferra's Giotto bedding. The lamps and nightstands are Studio Athena Calderone prototypes. Art: Max Laeuger