

DESIGNER DWELLING

LOFTY GOALS

Jason Wu, whose namesake fashion line celebrates its 10th anniversary in February, found a Tribeca space expansive enough to accommodate his grown-up lifestyle.

BY SARAH MEDFORD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEREMY LIEBMAN

JASON WU TURNED 34 a few months back, and lately the designer has been feeling his age. “When I started in this business, I always thought fashion parties were the best,” he says, pouring himself a glass of white wine in his Tribeca kitchen. “Now that I’m in it, they are the last thing I want to do at night. What’s more interesting to me is the Epicurious app. And cookbooks. I’m obsessed with Ina Garten. *Obsessed*. Everything she makes is perfect.” Wu, who flew in from Germany the day before, hosted friends last night for Thai red curry and steamed fish with lime and cilantro. “My next goal is to get better at baking,” he says. “I just bought a tart pan—I want to make a fruit tart.”

With a proper kitchen and plenty of stylish seating for entertaining, Wu’s Manhattan loft makes an appropriate setting for his grown-up aspirations. In February, the designer will mark the 10th anniversary of his namesake label, a collection of ultrafeminine ready-to-wear and accessories popular on the red carpet and with First Lady Michelle Obama, who wore his gowns to both of her husband’s inaugurations. He launched the business with a modest investment in 2007, three years out of the Parsons School of Design, and in 2014 sold a majority stake to investment firm InterLuxe, which has fueled his recent expansion into 140 stores worldwide. He also serves as the artistic director of Hugo Boss womenswear, headquartered just outside Stuttgart, Germany. This past June saw the debut of Grey Jason Wu, a more casual secondary line; and in August Wu opened the first shop-in-shop for his primary label at Saks Fifth Avenue’s New York flagship. The project’s interior designer, Andre Mellone, was well versed in Wu’s classically tailored aesthetic—he’d just spent a year shaping a new home for the designer and

his husband, Gustavo Rangel, the company’s chief brand officer.

The couple relocated with their two cats from Midtown, where they’d spent a decade living in the shadow of the Waldorf Astoria. The building they moved into, constructed in 2009, didn’t offer much in the way of detailing, but they saw possibilities in the two-bedroom loft’s generous proportions and unimpeded views. They imagined the space as a pared-down, styled-up sanctuary.

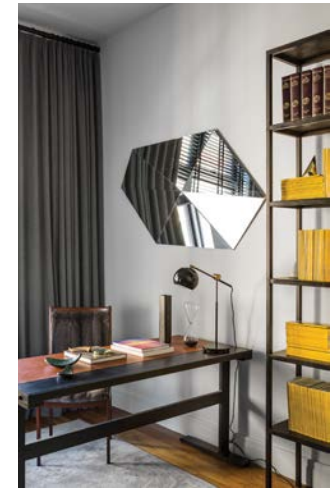
“I think there’s a certain richness to what Jason does with clothes,” says Mellone, a Brazilian-born New Yorker who met Wu and Rangel through friends.

“For the apartment, he wanted some of that for sure—but he didn’t want to go crazy. Jason is still a young guy. He didn’t want to create an entire life story overnight.”

Mellone has worked with fashion clients before, notably Thom Browne on global retail shops, so he was comfortable with the speed and specificity of Wu’s directives. He made the open living area more conducive to cooking and to hosting friends, as Wu had requested, by partly enclosing the kitchen (and slotting in a breakfast nook) and converting the second bedroom into a late-night hideaway for cocktails and TV. “Jason loved the fact that I draw,” Mellone >



COOK'S NOOK
Wu (right) with his husband, Gustavo Rangel, in the breakfast area of their loft. Table and banquette custom-designed by Andre Mellone. Vintage Marcel Breuer Cesca chair; Waldorf pendant light by Lambert & Fils.

**GRAY EMINENCE**

From left: Brazilian modernist side tables and chairs warm the living room; a desk in the bedroom.

recalls of their shared process. “After we first met, he sent me a card saying, ‘I can’t wait to see your sketches.’”

The role reversal was a pleasure for Wu, who shuttled in and out of the project between runway shows and trips abroad. The designer would drop a few references—Josef Albers, American midcentury furniture, gray flannel (gray is his favorite color)—and get on a plane, leaving Mellone to interpret.

“Andre and I make a pretty good pair because he’s supermasculine in his tastes and I’m very feminine,” says Wu. “Not in my living style particularly,

but just in what I like—soft and feminine and a lot of glamour. So we make a good counterpoint.” Wu talked Mellone into covering his bedroom desk chair in short-hair mink; Mellone talked Wu into toughening up the floor-length curtains with black venetian blinds, a look he associates with James Stewart in Alfred Hitchcock’s hypergendered 1958 film, *Vertigo*.

Throughout the loft, Mellone delivered on his client’s request for midcentury furnishings with less-expected examples from Europe and Brazil, including a Belgian Brutalist sideboard in the dining area and chrome-and-leather lounge chairs and

a pair of jacaranda-wood tables, all by Polish-Brazilian modernist Jorge Zalszupin, that lend warmth to the steely corner living room. A granite dining table—a minimalist 1980s design by Angelo Mangiarotti—turned out to be Wu’s favorite piece in the apartment. But it’s the runner-up a few feet away that most surprised him: a rippling screen of ebonized plywood by Ray and Charles Eames, circa 1946. “I said to Andre, ‘I grew up with screens, and they’re not chic,’” the designer recalls, breaking into laughter.

Wu and Rangel have started collecting art and

of the TV room. A pair of figure drawings Rangel bought in Italy keeps company with a Bruce Weber portrait of their friend Guinevere Van Seenus and a Cartier-Bresson boating scene from the 1930s. Over the sofa are photographs of Stephanie Seymour and Christy Turlington Burns, among other models, vamping in some of Wu’s favorite restaurants—La Grenouille, Mr. Chow, Indochine. “They are iconic for me,” he says of the images, which were shot by Inez and Vinoodh for Wu’s past ad campaigns. “The environment defines who the girl is. It’s very New York, and I’m a New York designer.”

Like many New Yorkers, Wu came from elsewhere—in his case Taiwan by way of Vancouver. He learned about design from magazines that glamorized America’s fashion capital. Some of his favorite issues are still stacked on his bedroom shelves next to a trove of saffron-colored *National Geographics*. For all his out-of-the-box success in fashion, Wu has always been interested in exploring a broader world of design. As a teenager, he created a line of dolls (“chic, not cute,” he says) for Integrity Toys and traveled to China to oversee their fabrication. A few years ago, he conceived a series of matte-black fixtures for the plumbing company Brizo (“Apparently they were big news in the faucet world,” he says); some are now installed in the loft.

New categories are under consideration. “I never came into this business thinking I was going to do it small,” the designer says before reaching onto the shelf to show off his latest acquisition: a plexiglass-boxed volume written by Christian Dior, with illustrations by René Gruau. It’s a cookbook. ●



FINE LINES From left: A Belgian Brutalist sideboard beneath a Brendan Lynch piece in the dining area; the den.

