

Philip Mitchell

MARCH 22, 2019



HOUSE • BY: SIAN BALLEEN, LESLEY HAUGE AND JEFF HIRSCH

*With a life enviably divided between three properties including a historic house in Nova Scotia, a place in Toronto as well as an Upper East Side apartment, designer **Philip Mitchell** and his husband **Mark Naransky** have managed to balance their Canadian roots with the need to maintain a design practice in New York City. They escape to the village of Chester in Nova Scotia as often as they can, although escape might not be quite the word since they also have a design office in the village, testament to the drive and energy that has put Philip Mitchell Design on the map. Perfectly placed therefore to talk about the differences between designing in New York and designing in Canada, Philip admits, “There’s less trying to convince someone to be patient in Canada.”*

You grew up in Canada—which part of Canada was that?

So I grew up in ... it’s complicated a little bit. My parents were older when they had me—my mother was forty-seven—so I was almost eighteen or nineteen years younger than the youngest child ... I have three older siblings.

Oh wow!

Yeah! When they had me, they wanted to travel a lot—they were retired then and they didn’t want to not just live their life. So I would be in school for the part of the year and then I would travel with them for part of the year. They were mostly traveling on the West Coast of the United States. I would have a tutor. It was a great experience for me because I got to see a lot more of the world than I would have if I had grown up more conventionally.



In the front entry of Philip and his husband, Mark Naransky's Upper East Side Apartment "Faint, 2014" by Max Wright hangs above a small French marble top console table. On the far wall, "Waterscapes," a photograph by Lisa Platt is displayed above "Doreen's Bible, 2011" by Brendan George Ko.



Wylo and Jacob, Philip and Mark's adorable Ganaraskans, make themselves comfortable on the living room sofa. The sofa was designed by Philip and is covered in "Mod Contrast" from Kravet. On the far wall "Yusopf Theater Curtain, St. Petersburg, Russia" a photograph by David Burdeny hangs to the left of an abstract work by Kayce Hughes and "Apple Tree" by an unknown artist. The chairs positioned between the artwork are from Lee Jofa.



Views across the living room: a chic mix of traditional and contemporary furnishings and art. The distinctive “Angular Momentum” sculpture chandelier was purchased from 1stdibs.



So you almost grew up as an only child.

Except for the fact that I grew up with my nieces and nephews who were around my age. My siblings used to tease me and say that I was a mistake and then my mother used to say, “Don’t listen to them. You were not a mistake—you were a surprise because a mistake I wouldn’t do over again. A surprise I would do over and over again.”

Oh that’s lovely—nice to know that you weren’t the changeling left on the doorstep. How do you think this kind of upbringing affected you?

It’s funny because we were talking about this earlier about spreading our lives across three houses and the three different locations we spend time in. I think that it allowed me to be very flexible, to embrace wherever it is I

to be. I travel extensively for work and it allows me to be on a plane two three times a week and not feel displaced or out of touch with what's going on.

It could have had the opposite effect. You could have longed to have just one place that was your only home and not to go anywhere.

It totally could have been that way but nobody ever made it seem like it was unusual. Does that make sense?

[Philip's husband, Mark Narsansky interjects] He got to grow up in LA. His family in Hollywood who lived up in the Hollywood Hills [and] they were in the fashion industry ... it was very cool.



A group of brass candlesticks that once belonged to Philip's mother are arranged on a wicker tray.



A view into the front entryway from the living room. Philip covered the walls in a geometric pattern by Thibaut from Kravet, which works as a perfect backdrop for

art collection.



A large abstract work by Brain Coleman hangs above a custom sectional sofa covered in linen from GP&J Baker.



Philip skillfully and fearlessly mixes art and photography from various periods and styles. Mark's photography, "Bel Air," hangs above a landscape painting by Gary

Pereira.

Did you always know that you were going to do something in design; you always headed in this direction?

From day one.

How lucky you are! Not many people know that about themselves so on.

I didn't know exactly but when I was about five or six, I used to draw women's fashions—I would sketch dresses and pantsuits. Our family had these big fashion connections and I had an uncle who always wanted to encourage the design part of me.

What do you find satisfying about this work?

I love that—and this is going to sound corny—but I love that we get to impact people's lives in a really great way. It's not necessarily to me about how aesthetically everything has to look because that's part of it obviously, but I try to get a feel for how [the clients] live, what their life is and how they're going to use their space. We flush out their taste, so to speak.



Another view into a corner of the living room. The large abstract canvas is by Stephen David Chizick.



Jacob peeking out from under a hexagon-shaped coffee table.



Stacks of art and design books find a home next to a bone side table displaying blue and white porcelain.





A marble table lamp from Patina is arranged next to a group of colorful ceramic objects. The “Self Portrait” is by David Scott and the small photo “My Tree” is by Jefferson Hayman.



A collection of paperweights is arranged near a slag glass table lamp.



How do you work with someone whose main aim is to impress other people?

I don't think those kinds of people come to us.

What are the differences between what people want in here and what people want in Canada.

I think there's definitely ... er ... I would say [Canadian] people are a little more open to having things being antique, family heirlooms ... I feel like in the United States it is a little bit about, um ... newer, fancier. It's a little more low key in Canada in the sense that people are less concerned about impressing and more concerned about living and enjoying what they have. Does that make sense? [Also] there's less trying to convince somebody to buy a product in Canada.

That is interesting but not, I guess, unexpected. And New Yorkers are exactly known for their patience.

It's interesting also because a lot of Canadian clients are more interested in the experience—the entire process. And they sort of go all the way. People here, once the room is full of furniture, will say, "That's fine. We're less concerned about the accessories," whereas in Canada, they want the layout

Do you often change stuff around in your own home?

We don't change things a lot. But everyone is always concerned with it not being finished and completed—I would say that not just us but most of our clients don't have that mentality. It's not so much about changing as it is moving things around to fit new things in.



Wylo and Jacob taking over the living room sofa for their naps.





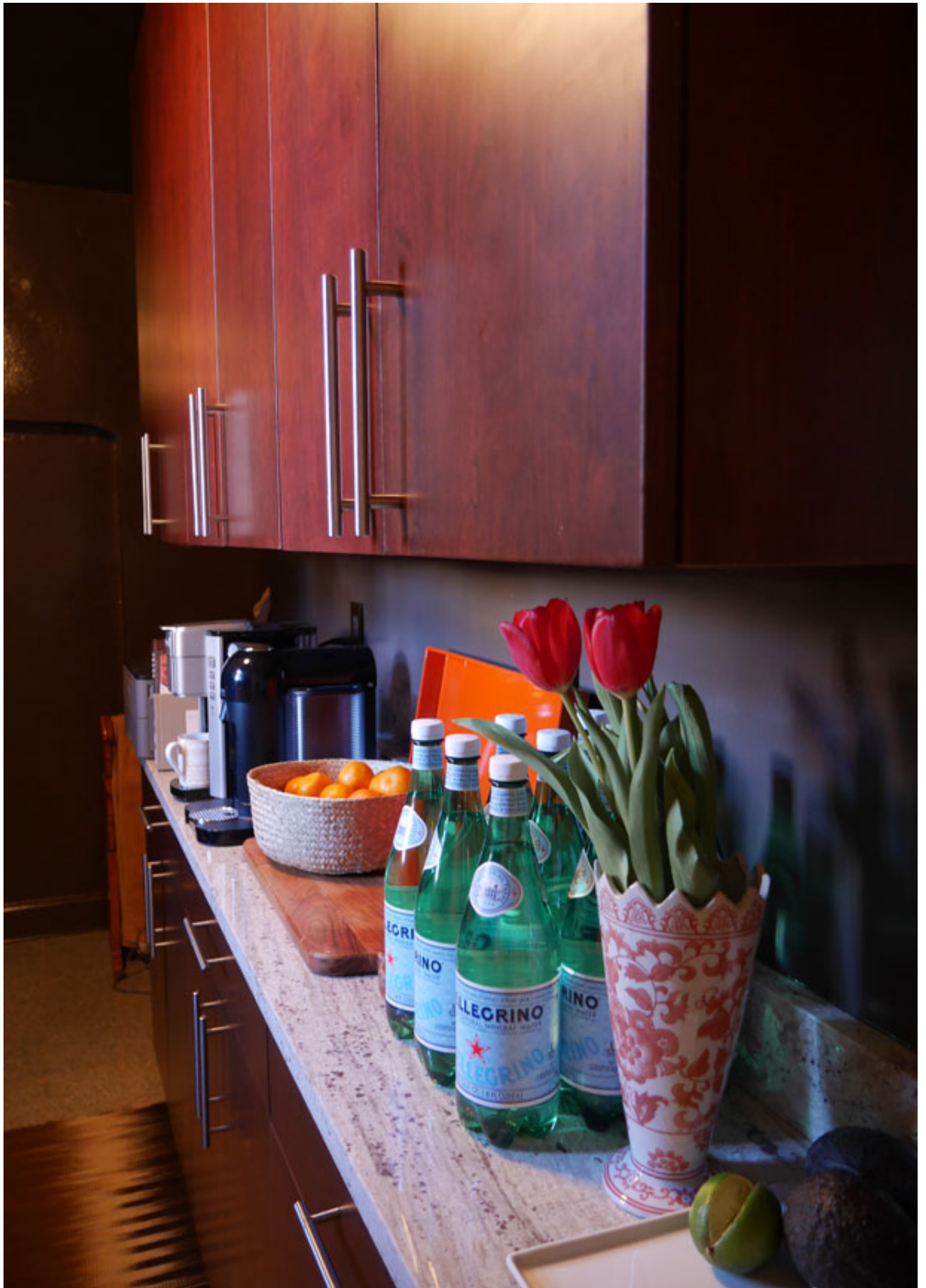


Trinket boxes collected by Philip and Mark over the years are arranged with more design books and brightly colored roses.



A small alcove off of the living room, once the dining area, now serves double-duty as an office and home bar. A black-and-white work by Alex Livingston hangs above

an Edwardian console table found on 1stdibs.



The small kitchen has all the necessary goods for Manhattan apartment living.

I noticed that you seem very keen on grouping pictures into a gallery arrangement. What tip would you give someone who wanted to do this with their own pictures?

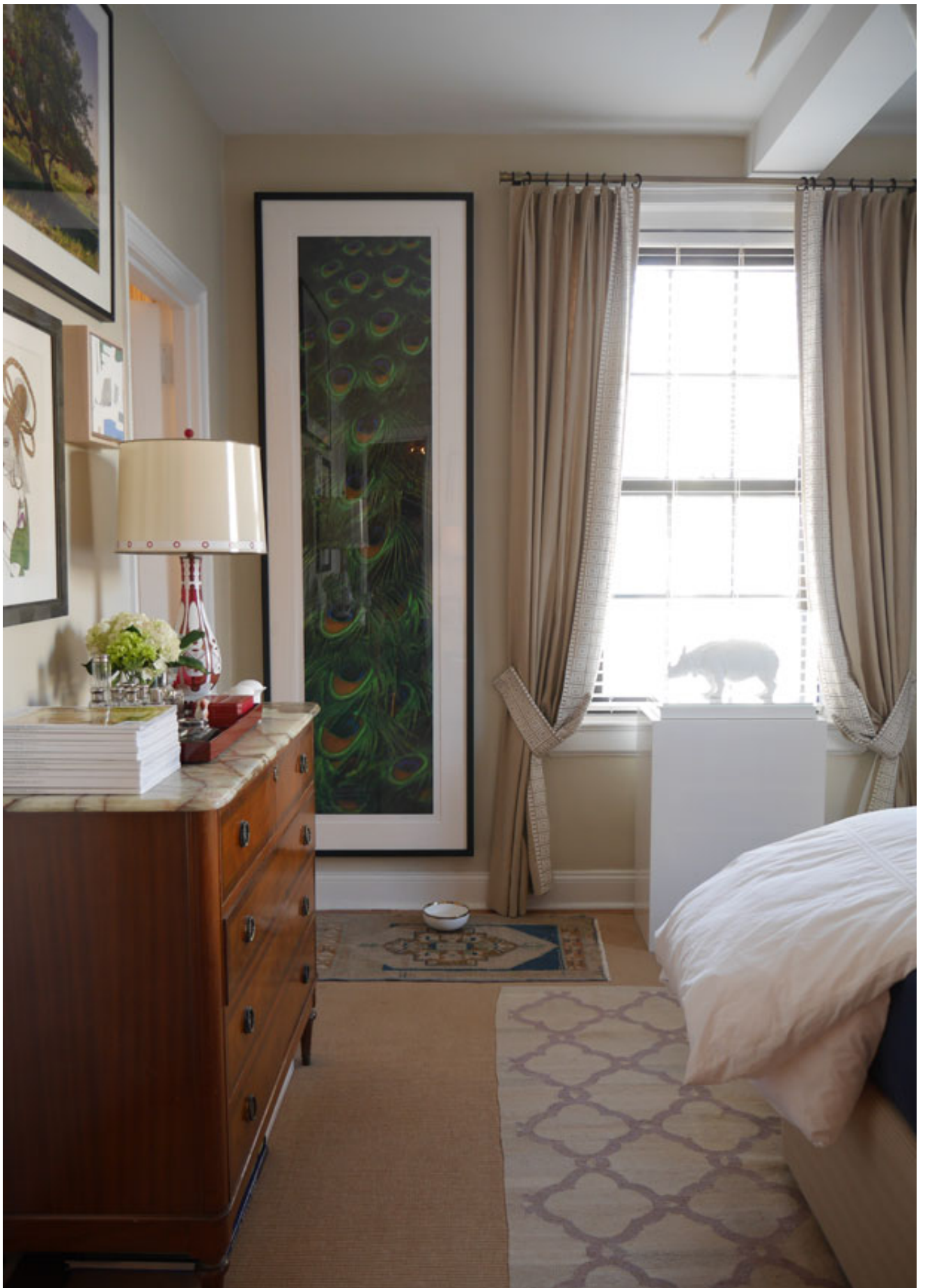
The key is to think about the scale; you have to think about how something relates to another thing—not matching. For me it's about them standing on their own but still working together. I would not say it's like, the easiest in the world.

I read somewhere that you particularly like the 1920s aesthetic—what do you like about it?

I liked the simplicity of the design. I really do like classic and I like things that are appropriate and I like historically-inspired.

I always think of the 1920s as quite decadent.

It depends. Obviously there's the '20s when the Rockefellers were going crazy and building their huge, mammoth houses but I'm talking more about a restrained simple Georgian apartment, great lines and simple moldings and details.





In another bedroom corner a photograph "Condoms" by Heidi Leverty hangs above "Eucalyptus," an oil on board by Daniele Lemieux. The "Townsend" chair from I

Jofa is covered velvet by Oscar de la Renta, also available through Lee Jofa.



An eye-catching Nymphenburg porcelain rhinoceros holds court in front of the master bedroom window.

You know, I never hear about Canadian designers, I have to say—where are they?

I think in Canada it's approached differently. I feel like here designers are definitely more celebrity-oriented. In Canada it's not like that ... it's low key and there's not a lot of television shows.

Is everything in Canada low key?

[Laughs] ... a lot of things are.

How do you think growing up in Canada influenced your aesthetic taste?

I would say it's a combination of things. My mother was a decorator also. I grew up in a lovely home, very comfortable but interestingly enough when I got my first apartment, it was very clean and contemporary. Everything was gray and all the furniture was white—I think I was revolting against the cabbage roses. In hindsight I see my mother had incredible taste and a great eye for comfort.

Tell us about Nova Scotia—what do you do when you're at your house there?

Oh my god ... everything! Both of us cook a lot. Mark is an incredible cook. We make lobster ... I also have an office there as well.

Oh cool!

And we just bought a [second] house on Christmas Day.

You bought a house on Christmas Day!

It's an old commercial property and there's a farmhouse on the property and this is going to sound ridiculous but we had a suspicion that someone was going to buy it and tear it down and build like a Six Flags or something. We want to restore it. We're just impassioned about restoring things.



Mounted wall lights from Urban Electric flank a painting by Andrew Plum, “Crows at Longchamp”. Philip snapped up the embroidered cushions at a Chelsea Textile

sample sale.



A small oil portrait of Jacob and Wyllo by Beth Rundquist is positioned on top of bedside table from Made Goods.



What do you like about the village [of Chester]?

Oh my God, the people are so friendly. It's like this charming little spa a seaside village but it's sort of New-England-y ... Cape Cod-dy. We have rocky coastline but we have beautiful beaches too. Our weather is not dissimilar from Maine. We're a little bit of a micro-climate. We're right the world famous Peggy's Cove and south of us is the world-famous Lunenburg, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

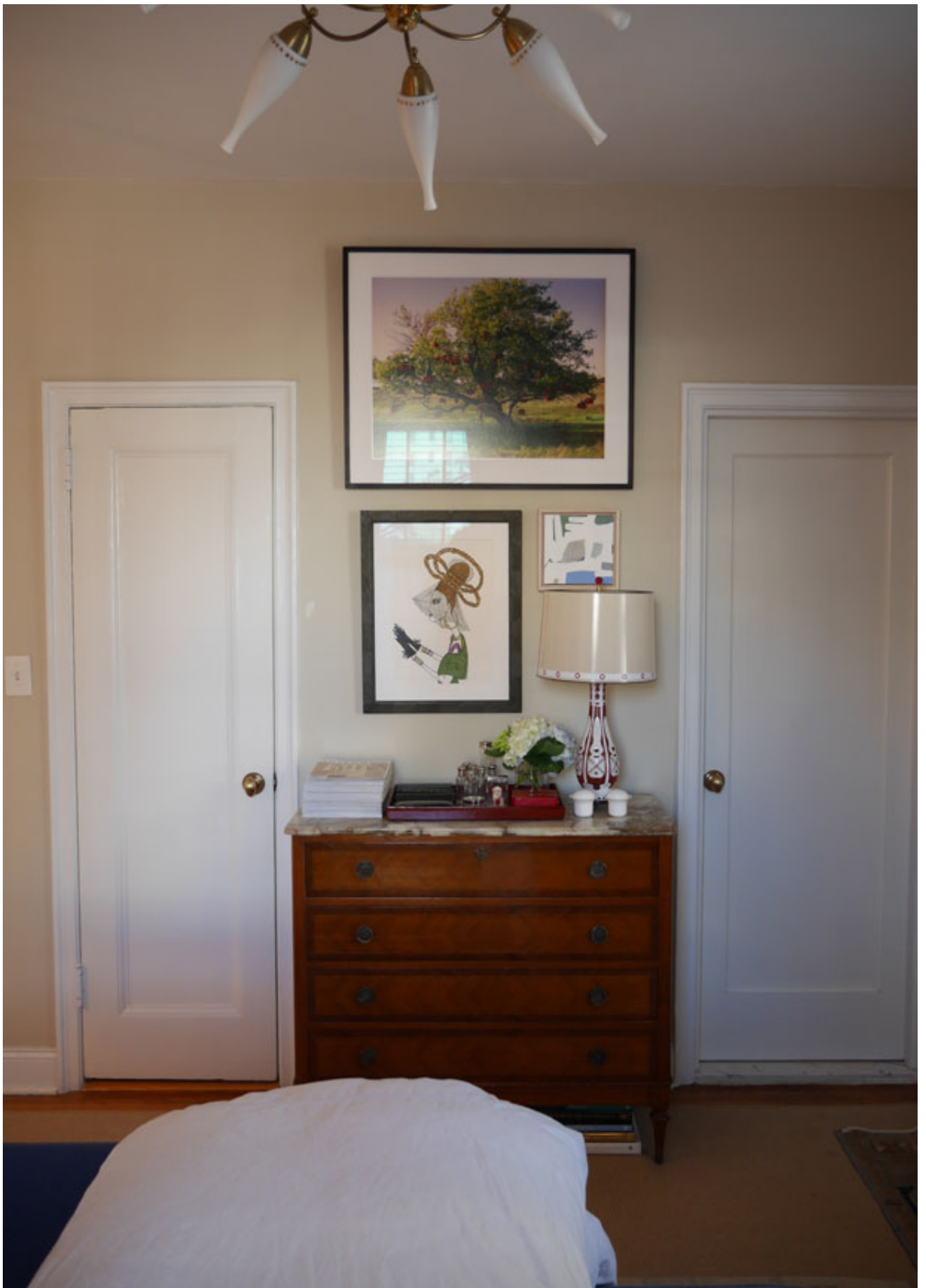
Do you have a boat?

Philip: We don't ... yet.

Mark: We needed to get a kitchen first.



Hanging on the far wall a small abstract painting by Robert Kamnatnik hangs above “Summer Sunset, 2013” by Stephen David Chizick.



A photograph "Apples on a Tree" by Amalie Atkins hangs above a drawing by Rebecca Mosses from the Ralph Pucci Gallery.



Philip and Mark's enviably tidy but well-stocked bedroom closet may give Marie Kondo fans a second thought.





What does New York give you that these other places don't give you?

What's amazing when it comes to design is [something] that we take for granted ... well, generally people here take it for granted—and that is how people want to be able to see, touch and feel everything. Here, a showroom is twice the size of anywhere else. When you come here, it's a treat to be able to walk into a showroom and they have every sofa. Oh my God ... it's exciting!

I thought because you were Canadian you were both going to be like fishermen or mountain climbers or something.

[*They laugh*]. I swim in the ocean every day in Nova Scotia—I'm an ocean swimmer. [The water temperature] can't be less than fifty degrees—but I don't wear a wetsuit. I will swim for like an hour in the icy water. I love

hour later, I'm warm again. I'm a hot person ... I always run hot.



PREVIOUS POST
TRENDING
FASHIONABLY: NYFW
2019

NEXT
Improvise, Adap
Overc