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Joana Vasconcelos' art takes root in a Manhattan apartment for an ambassador

Take a tour of the Kelly Behun-designed apartment for Ambassador Randi Charno Levine, home to her extensive art collection, including this new commission by Vasconcelos

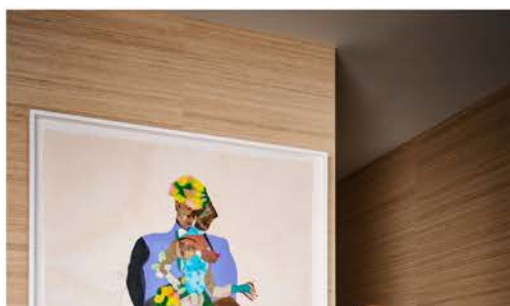
By Rosa Bertoli, Michael Reynolds - Producer Published 24 hours ago In [Features](#)



Joana Vasconcelos' installation for the apartment's loggia is based on a theme of 'garden of delights' (Image credit: PHOTOGRAPHY: THOMAS LOOF PRODUCER: MICHAEL REYNOLDS)



Pioneering Portuguese artist Joana Vasconcelos has a propensity to reimagine the everyday with bold, larger-than-life expressions, famously once turning tampons into a chandelier, and metal pots into a pair of monumental high-heeled shoes. 'You can only do a great project when you find the right place: a museum, a location or a client,' Vasconcelos once told us. For her latest commission, she found the latter two of those: the [New York](#) apartment of Randi Charno Levine, the former US ambassador to [Portugal](#), in a BIG-designed tower in West Chelsea.





Ambassador Randi Charno Levine with Tschabalala Self's *Mista & Mis'sess*, 2021 (on wall), and Jenny Holzer's *Selection from truisms: words tend to...* (text from truisms 1977-79), 2020 (Image credit: Thomas Loof)

The apartment was designed by [Kelly Behun](#), whom Levine chose for her thoughtful approach to a curated home. 'I had seen a number of projects by Kelly and her team and was struck by how they balanced restraint with real warmth; nothing felt forced, and nothing felt like it was there simply to impress,' says Levine. 'That sensibility, of letting objects and art complement each other within a space rather than compete, was exactly what I was looking for. Kelly and I worked closely to ensure that each space was beautiful, but also functional and comfortable for both entertaining and living.'



In the dining room is a custom oak dining table by Kelly Behun Studio with 'Baba' chairs in Bouclette 03, by Emmanuelle Simon via The Invisible Collection. On each side are 'Lc2 Margas' chairs by Louise Lijencrantz for &Tradition (Image credit: Thomas Loof)



A Minotti 'Cosy' modular sofa takes centre stage, paired with a Casey McCafferty side table, and standing on a custom-designed rug by Kelly Behun and The Rug Company. On the right is a 'Dumbo' chair in Nobilis fabric by Hubert Le Gall, via Twenty First Gallery (Image credit: Thomas Loof)

The space also had to accommodate an important art collection, gathered over decades and featuring significant pieces by the likes of Tschabalala Self, Jenny Holzer, Cecily Brown and Hank Willis Thomas. 'Much of my collection reflects my life in cultural diplomacy: pieces that came out of friendships with artists, or moments when a work resonated strongly and I knew that I wanted to live with it,' says Levine.





Joana Vasconcelos' commissioned work for the apartment's loggia
(Image credit: Thomas Loof)

'It's as though a small part of the city's storied skyline has been transported inside, albeit more colourfully'

KELLY BEHUN

The apartment opens into a loggia with far-reaching views across Manhattan to the Empire State Building, Hudson Yards and the Hudson River, and Levine saw it as an opportunity to commission one of her favourite artists to intervene in the space. In 2023, Vasconcelos had taken part in an exhibition that Levine had curated during her time in Portugal, which brought together American and Portuguese artists. For the occasion, Vasconcelos lent one of her wrought-iron teapots, a monumental 4m-tall structure.

The artist then invited Levine to attend the A/W 2023 Dior show in Paris, for which Vasconcelos had created an immersive environment, featuring amorphous, tentacular shapes, clad in her signature mix of textiles, crochet and knitted surfaces, embellished with elements from the collection itself. 'As guests, we sat among the various installations, becoming part of the artwork itself,' says Levine. 'How often do we, as art lovers, get to live, play and rest within an incredible art installation?'



(Image credit: Thomas Loof)

She knew Vasconcelos had to be the one commissioned for the apartment's

loggia, and she worked closely with the artist to develop the piece, which is based on a theme of 'garden of delights'. The elements defining the space include columns and abstracted sculptures shaped like bold, exaggerated palm trees, which metamorphose into seating elements. The colour and material palettes are quintessentially Vasconcelos, with layered textiles embellished by fringes, feathers, beads and ruffles, and some of the upholstery from Behun's interiors have been used to connect the loggia with the rest of the apartment. New York is in the background, and it's hard to say if the city complements the installation or the other way around.

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AMBASSADOR RANDI CHARNO LEVINE

'There's an exuberance to Joana's piece that creates a strong focus within the space: it's quite literally the first thing you see when you enter the home,' says Behun. 'It has such a beautiful and radiant spirit, one that really reflects Randi's personality – it's richly textured and layered, and I love how its character shifts as the light changes throughout the day. When it lights up at night, it's as though a small part of the city's storied skyline has been transported inside, albeit more colourfully. It so perfectly represents Randi, her passion for art and her unwavering support of artists.'

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Take a tour of Ambassador Randi Charno Levine's Manhattan apartment by Kelly Behun





Chandelier by Frida Fjellman, via Hostler Burrows. Custom Kelly Behun Studio dining table with integrated lazy Susan with 'Giac' dining chairs, via DLV. On the table are Michela Cattai glass sculptures, via Maison Gerard, and on the wall is Jeffrey Gibson's *Eye Of The Storm Like A Hurricane*, 2020
(Image credit: Thomas Loof)



In the media room, a custom Kelly Behun Studio sofa, upholstered in Clarence House Tibet fabric, and a trio of Marbera custom coffee tables in Picasso quartzite sit on a Moroccan rug by Soufflane. On the wall are a pair of Laura Gonzalez 'Capucine' sconces and Alison Elizabeth Taylor's *Shed Bed Chainlink Forest Scorpion Sunrise*, 2018
(Image credit: Thomas Loof)



In the home office is a Darren Romanelli 'Quilted Desk' and matching chair, via Friedman Benda, while on the desk is a piece by Jasmin Anoshkin, via Hostler Burrows. Above the desk is *Raft*, by Christopher Myers, 2022, and on the left is *Little Big Ball #0*, by David Muller, 2008
(Image credit: Thomas Loof)





One corner of the living space features a furry 'Florentino' chaise by Aguirre Design and a side table from the 'Echo' series by Ian Alistair Cochran, via Tuleste, with a pair of 'Duchess' chairs by Mattia Bonetti, via David Gill. The coffee table is by Marcin Rusak, from the 'Pressed Flowers' series, while on the wall is Jeffrey Gibson's *Eye of the Storm Like a Hurricane*, 2020.
(Image credit: Thomas Loof)



'Sensu' sideboard by Eva Szumilas, via Studio Twenty Seven with ceramics by Dominique Mercadal, via Amelie du Chalard. On the wall is a series by Kara Walker, 2011
(Image credit: Thomas Loof)



A view of the home office featuring a 1930s 'H269' armchair by Jindřich Halabala, via Morentz, and a Lucas Recchia side table on a custom rug designed by Kelly Behun for The Rug Company. At the entrance is Amy Sherard's *As Soft as She is...*, 2024
(Image credit: Thomas Loof)





The custom bar by Kelly Behun Studio is made of oryx and brass and features a pair of pendant lamps by Soft Witness via Objective Gallery
(Image credit: Thomas Loof)



In the main bedroom, a Cecily Brown painting hangs above the bed, which is a custom Kelly Behun design. Lighting in the room includes flower sconces by Inzeing on each side of the bed, while on the ceiling is a pendant light by Pinch, from the Future Perfect. On the bed is a vintage 'Kärvar' tapestry by Barbo Nilsson from 1956, via FJ Hakimian
(Image credit: Thomas Loof)



In the bedroom is a pair of Ro'Win Atelier 'Conq' chairs, via Twenty First Gallery, on a custom rug designed by Kelly Behun for The Rug Company
(Image credit: Thomas Loof)





In the main bathroom, a custom oak vanity by Kelly Behun adds warmth to the room, enhanced by the vintage Murano glass ceiling light
(Image credit: Thomas Loof)



The vanity desk by Kelly Behun in oak, brass and faux parchment is paired with a Christopher Baker 'Series 1 Lotus' table lamp, via Dobrinka Gallery. The chair is from a [limited-edition collaboration](#) by Pierre Yovanovitch and Christian Louboutin
(Image credit: Thomas Loof)





In the bathroom, a custom vanity by Kelly Behun in calacatta dune gold marble is paired with a pair of George William Bell glass sculptures via Lyle Gallery and a mirror by Bryan O'Sullivan. On the wall is a De Gournay wallpaper with a vintage Murano glass sconce (Image credit: Thomas Loof)

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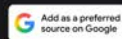


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