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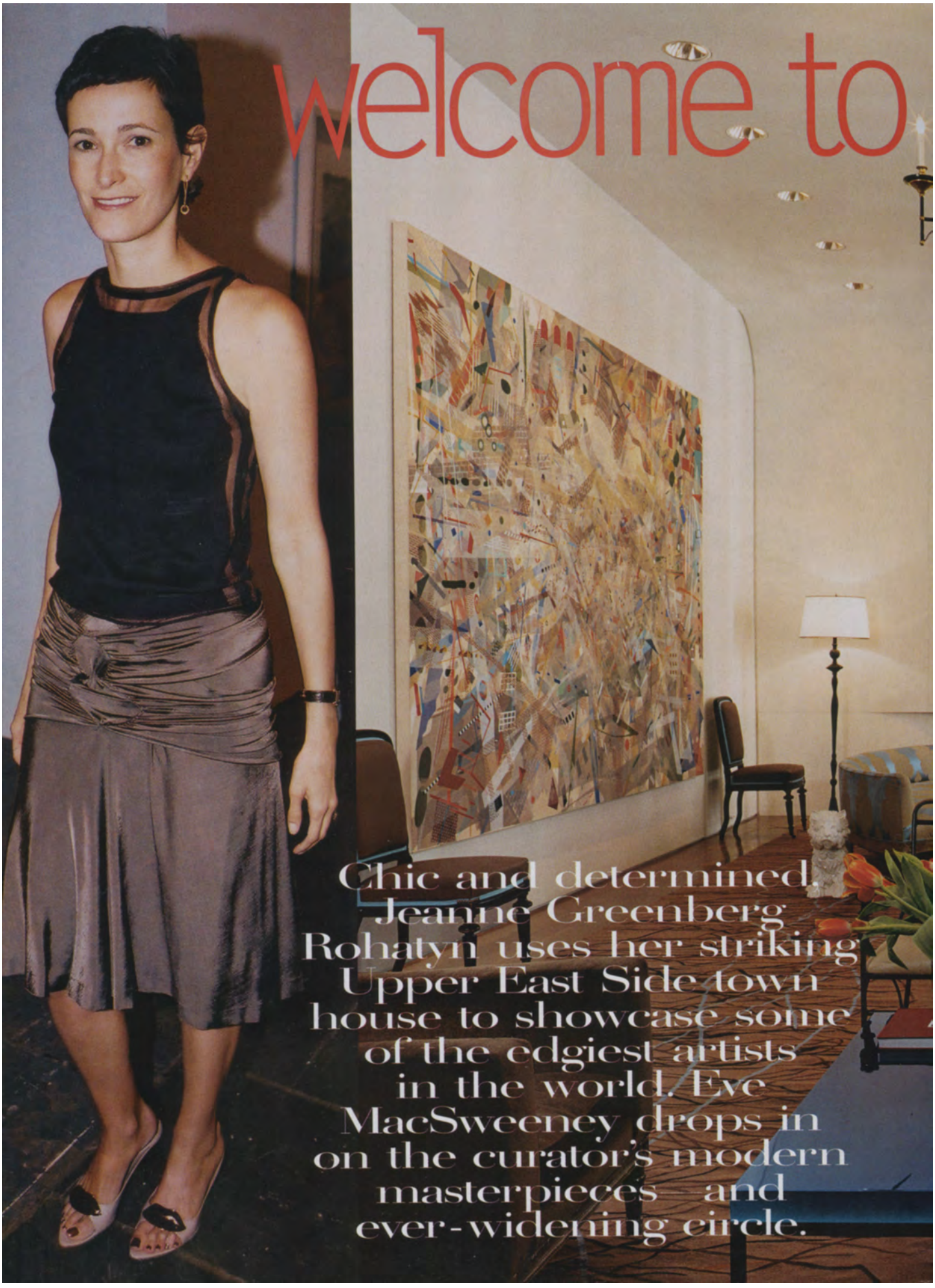

welcome to

Chic and determined, Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn uses her striking Upper East Side town house to showcase some of the edgiest artists in the world. Eve MacSweeney drops in on the curator's modern masterpieces—and ever-widening circle.

the town house

COME INTO MY PARLOR. . . . Greenberg, *left,* in a YSL skirt at a Whitney opening. *Right,* the living room, decorated with Napoleon III and 1930s and '40s French furniture, includes a pair of Giacometti metal chairs facing a blue resin table designed by Diana Viñoly and an Aubusson rug designed by Rafael Viñoly. On the walls are, *left,* Ben Edwards's *Decoherence,* 2001, *center,* Julie Mehretu's *Dispersion,* 2002, and, *right,* Wolfgang Tillmans's *Aufsicht,* 2000.

Photographed by François Halard. Sittings Editor: Hamish Bowles.

In the thirties, the artist Florine Stettheimer would unveil her paintings in her Bryant Park studio and entertain the cultural players of the day in a room hung with cellophane curtains and adorned with gold flowers. Some decades later, the art dealer, patron, collector, and hostess Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn, for whom Stettheimer is an abiding inspiration (she once re-created Stettheimer's studio at Manhattan's Armory Show, down to a pianist playing Virgil Thomson compositions), regularly unveils the work of others and entertains a broad cross section of New York's culturally inclined in her own version of a salon at her Upper East Side home.

At an opening in September of portraits by the young photographer Katy Grannan, which Greenberg discreetly presided over in a floral Chloé blouse and velvet pants, the flowers were not gold but heavy-scented white tuberoses, and the curtains were not cellophane but gauzy lengths of simulated silk. Grannan—whose models, hired through local newspaper ads, reveal themselves in the trappings of their fantasies (in short shorts against a draped window; naked on a bed, with high heels on display)—showed her work against canvas strips of digitally designed wallpaper by the sculptor and jeweler Kara Hamilton. A bamboo-leaf pattern, it reflected the conservatory feel of Greenberg's exhibition room, which overlooks a bamboo-and-moss garden, and neatly tied together the tradition of decorative handcrafted wallpaper in grand historic houses with the tacky seventies versions seen in many of the interiors in Grannan's photographs.

Uniting disparate worlds has become something of a trademark of Greenberg's. A gamine 36-year-old who has morphed from art adviser to gallery partner to saloniste, she straddles tastes and scenes with a blithe disregard for definition. Married to financier Nicholas Rohatyn (son of Felix Rohatyn, the American ambassador to France during the Clinton administration), she's as likely to be entertaining Rockefellers and museum grandees as cutting-edge art-world types in her dining room, which is hung with a pair of Chris Ofili's exquisite paintings (made notorious by Rudy Giuliani's hysterical reaction to elephant dung) and a slightly edited mural by Kara Walker depicting the indignities visited on African-Americans in the antebellum period. "I feel it's important for me to show my generation, and that this is really what I choose to live with," she says. "When people see that this work is challenging but it also looks great and is very livable, they start becoming interested, too."

In Alexander McQueen with daughter Coco at a Carlo Mollino opening, Salon 94.

In Chloé with Katy Grannan at Grannan's opening, Salon 94.

In Fendi with Cecily Brown and friend, Gagosian Gallery.

In Zang Toi at a Salon 94 symposium.

In Gucci dress and Fendi jacket with husband Nicholas at the opening of Dia:Beacon.

If she identifies herself with Florine Stettheimer, others see Greenberg as closer to a latter-day Peggy Guggenheim—who happens to serve better food. (Guggenheim, notoriously thrifty, was known to open a few cans of tuna at her soirees; Greenberg offers pan-Asian delicacies—"chopsticks create so much less mess," she says.) She is adept at using her financial resources to make things happen, and recently found a means of bringing all her interests and priorities literally under one roof in the town house she and her family moved into last year. Since 1999, besides working with the brilliant and elusive African-American artist David Hammons, Greenberg had been a partner in the Fifty-seventh Street gallery Lawrence Rubin–Greenberg Van Doren, along with her father, art dealer Ronald Greenberg, and his associates. Greenberg *fille*'s role was to bring in wildly unexpected young artists who were exhibited alongside such blue-chip commodities as Twombly and the Diebenkorn estate. Her second show, curated with the artist Gregory Crewdson, caused a sensation: "Another Girl, Another Planet" presented the work of a tier of emerging, mainly female photographers, including Grannan, Malerie Marder, and Justine Kurland, several of them former students of Crewdson's at Yale, who deploy a broadly narrative style. What they had in common—youth, femininity, a way of merging different types of photography and flouting the distinctions between art and popular culture—created the inklings of a "movement" that the media love. It was a coup for Greenberg; a fortuitous combination of instinct, eye, timing, and commercial acumen. "These younger women artists were there for

"When people come into the house and they see that this work is challenging but it also looks great and is very livable, they start becoming interested too," says Greenberg

HOT SEATS
A pair of Chris Ofili paintings, *X & Y = O*, 1998, hang in the dining room. *Center*, David Hammons's *Untitled (Basketball Chandelier)*, 2002, a basketball net refashioned as a chandelier, greets guests ascending the stairs.

"Once you've got her behind you," says one of

THE GROUP

Clockwise from far left: Katy Grannan in a Rochas skirt; Paula Hayes, Malerie Marder, Kara Hamilton, Laurie Simmons, all in Dior by John Galliano; Aida Ruilova in Helmut Lang; and Grannan's daughter, Ella, age two. *Far right*, Greenberg in Alexander McQueen, and Paul Graham. Details, stores, see In This Issue.

Photographed by Norman Jean Roy. Sittings Editor: Phyllis Posnick.

Greenberg's artists, "it's an extraordinary shift"

SHADOW PLAYERS
For her children's sake, Greenberg censored the scatological content of Kara Walker's mural, *Worlds Exposition*, 1997, in the dining room, furnished with Maxime Old tables reworked by Diana Viñoly and mid-century orchestra chairs. At right, Jeff Koons's *Puppy*.

the taking, and she was quick to figure it out," says artist and former Yale critic Laurie Simmons. And it raised the stakes for Greenberg's next move.

"I found that the young artists I'd been working with needed a space to experiment," she says, curled up in a pair of old studded Chloé pants and a beige-and-gold tank in one of the 1930s French chairs in her parlor-floor living room. Simultaneously, the couple wanted to find a bigger home in which to raise their growing family (they have two young children), as well as to house some of their extensive art collection. "We had been looking at apartments," says Greenberg, "and none of them had high-enough ceilings for the art, or they were too expensive, or whatever. So we started looking for wrecks." One day, Nicholas came across a double-fronted building close to the park, owned by the Louise Wise adoption agency, which was famous for bringing Jewish children to New York during World War II. "The next day, I came here with him, and we looked up the stairwell and said, This is incredible."

When they reviewed the layout, "it became very clear that downstairs was either going to be a piano room or an art gallery," Greenberg continues. "Neither of us played piano, so it was an obvious choice. I had been looking up in Harlem for a space, but this room had the perfect proportions." Her plan had the added advantage of keeping her close to her children. "I saw there was an opportunity to do something in my home.

Everything just came together at the same time and gelled."

She describes the renovation as a "total gut job," for which she called in her friend Diana Viñoly, who had decorated the Rohatyns' former apartment and their Hamptons beach house, and her husband, the renowned Argentinian-born architect Rafael Viñoly. His plan restructured the building and included his signature features in wood and glass in the shape of a new staircase, and a bow-fronted curtain wall for the exhibition space, which extends the ground floor several feet into the garden. Fresh from designing his concert hall for the Philadelphia Orchestra, made almost entirely of wood and contoured in the shape of a cello, Viñoly came up with a semioval stairwell topped by a skylight and veneered in glossy, curved panels of burled walnut. "Sexy" and "voluptuous," in the Viñolys' words, it combines the dramatic elegance of a thirties entrance-maker with the abstract geometry of twenty-first-century design.

OPEN SPACES

The exhibition room, seen from the garden, features Viñoly's curved-glass curtain wall as a contemporary play on the conservatory.

The architect, who also designed a series of curved and recessed fireplaces for the house and the 36-foot Aubusson rug in the living room (which took nine months to make), was careful to balance the demands of husband and wife, which he characterizes as respectively "attention to the protection of the kids and this kind of supersexy spirit that is behind Jeanne." Both were vigorously collaborative on the project. "It was beyond homework—it was as if they were working here!" Viñoly recalls with a laugh. He sees his greatest achievement as the organization and circulation of the space, a task made easier by the building's proportions. "The house is a celebration of width, in a way," he says. "It's grand without being imposing."

Its classic Victorian facade notwithstanding, the home the Rohatyns wanted to create was modern and timeless, rather than traditional or archly contemporary. "It's not minimalist, but it doesn't have anything superfluous," says Diana Viñoly, who describes the interiors, appropriately enough, as "a blank canvas." Energy was spent principally on structure and bones, like the pocket walls for the drapes and the expensive but, to Rafael Viñoly's eye, critical use of curved rather than flat panes of glass for his bow window. The furniture, a mix of Napoleon III, thirties and forties France, and mid-century glass and Lucite pieces (including fourteen ice-block chandeliers bought from a southern France casino that sparkle their way up the house), was bought mainly from the Paris *puces* and envisioned as secondary to the art, which takes center stage. "It's one of the few instances where the architecture, the interiors, and the art are really on the same wavelength," says Diana Viñoly.

Welcoming the public into one's home takes a certain courage. The ground-floor exhibition space, known as Salon 94, is open three days a week, and the living and dining rooms, hung with works "curated" by Greenberg from the Rohatyns' private collection, are regularly used for private views, receptions for museum groups, artists' talks, and panel discussions. (A privileged few visitors are invited to ascend farther for a tour of the family rooms on the two upper floors.) Though she admits that the metal child gates designed to fit the staircase can be useful in drawing the line between public and private domains, Greenberg seems relaxed about the traffic in her home—at Grannan's opening, she doesn't flinch when a guest upends a glass of red wine on the Aubusson carpet. "She's not house-proud in the conventional way," Diana Viñoly says of her client. "She always treats it as her home, not a showplace."

Perhaps even more impressive, Greenberg has brought her publicity-shy husband along on the journey. "I think at first it made him a little less comfortable because he is such a private person, but now he really enjoys it," she says. "He loves the openings, and he likes the idea that artists will stay with us [they have a spare room for the purpose, hung with erotic art, on the ground floor] and become part of our family life. We also use the living room for his business dinners, and he's always very proud to show the salon, so we have drinks there first. And now we've started to see people from his industry coming to our openings, so it's become part of our lifestyle and expanded our personal lives."

Greenberg, who describes her husband as "a collector at heart," has also expanded his interests from a previous specialty in Asian objects into adventures in contemporary art. Together the couple has been building an in-depth collection of a handful of artists, many of them of African descent, including Ofili, Ellen Gallagher, Julie Mehretu, and Hammons, who tends to make profound but casually telling pieces out of humble or found objects (hair, a stone, chicken bones) or vice versa, as in the case of a basketball baseboard recast as an elaborate crystal-and-glass chandelier, which hangs resplendent in the landing between the living and dining rooms. As a measure of Nicholas Rohatyn's travels in the art world, Hammons appropriated a pair of kneeling attendant Buddhas from his Asian collection, strung a thread between their clasped hands, and attached a safety pin. The piece, which he called *Praying for Safety* (playing on Americans' current fears and fragile hopes of self-protection), had pride of place in the Italian Pavilion at this year's Venice Biennale exhibition. Alongside these paintings and sculptures, Greenberg pursues her own passion for contemporary photography in a personal collection. "I'm pretty aggressive about it," she says. "At some point it will go together as a large body of work."

In the year since she opened Salon 94 with a show by *(continued on page 510)*

"Jeanne knows how to blur boundaries and do it brilliantly," says Gregory Crewdson. "She has been able to reinvent what a gallerist is"

I DREAM OF JEANNE

Greenberg, in her own Fendi dress, stands against the burled-walnut staircase of her double-width town house, designed by the architect Rafael Viñoly.

Photographed by Norman Jean Roy. Sittings Editor: Phyllis Posnick.