



THE DECOR

NOVEMBER

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A Design
Mic Drop
in Miami

The Kitchen Coup

CURTAIN RAISER

ELLE DECOR partners with designers Christine and John Gachot to refresh an iconic lounge at a New York institution, the Metropolitan Opera House.

By Helena Madden Photographs by William Jess Laird Styled by Bebe Howorth

LIKE MANY NEW YORKERS, CHRISTINE AND JOHN GACHOT HAVE an unwavering love for the Metropolitan Opera. The ELLE DECOR A-List designers have passed through the building's glass doors many times to see canonical operas like *The Barber of Seville*; their son Boris walked past the cascading fountains in the plaza outside every day on his way to performing arts classes at nearby Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School. So when ELLE DECOR called on the duo to redesign the Met Opera Patron Lounge, formerly known as the Eleanor Belmont Room, the answer from the Gachots was a resounding and enthusiastic yes.

When the opera house, designed by Wallace K. Harrison, opened in 1966, the legendary decorator Billy Baldwin was brought in to design the lounge. The space already had drama, with wall-to-wall windows and a domed ceiling, so Baldwin added a dash of practicality, creating different, flexible seating areas for guests. As the decades passed, though, it became clear that the space needed a refresh. Enter the ▷

The Metropolitan Opera's Keebler J. Straz Lounge features design by Gachot and furniture by Roche Bobois. Floor lamps by Hudson Valley Lighting; wallcovering by Élitis; custom pillows in a Clarence House fabric and curtains of a Fabricut fabric made by Distinctive Windows.





CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT:
A portrait of Eleanor Belmont, the first woman Met Opera board member, hangs on a wallcovering by Élitis. Lamp from Artemest.

In the bathrooms, the fittings are by Waterworks from the Bond collection, designed in collaboration with Gachot. Sinks, mirrors, and stone also by Waterworks.

The warm tones in the lounge echo the red carpeting and travertine in the lobby of the opera house.



A custom bar with wall-mounted shelves by Amuneal has a counter in Absolute Black granite from ABC Stone that was fabricated by Precision Stone. Custom mirror walls by Bendheim.

Gachots, whose penchant for warm, sophisticated interiors and whose experience working on luxury hospitality projects like the Pendry Manhattan West and Detroit's Shinola Hotel seemed the perfect fit.

In terms of inspiration, the Gachots went straight to the source, diving headfirst into the Met's extensive archive, which carefully documented the lounge's history. "The original sketches and photographs were great, so we reinterpreted that," says John. "We're standing on the shoulders of giants here, certainly." Of course, as huge fans of the opera, having access to its incredible library was also a rare treat. "John would go to the archives and I would be here at the studio, and I'd think, Oh, well, we'll see him tomorrow," Christine jokes. "We're never getting him out—it's not going to happen!"

Taking a cue from Baldwin's original layout, the Gachots carved the space into zones for gathering, whether it is perching at the bar or relaxing on seating arrangements anchored by furniture from Roche Bobois. They tried to marry the new interiors with the opera's iconic common areas and halls. "We wanted to transport you, but we didn't want it to feel out of place," Christine says. The resulting

palette of blush, red, and camel complements the gold and travertine accents of the main lobby. Where the opera's staircase and lobby has its famed red carpet, the lounge now has a glittering gold custom carpet by Creative Matters that twinkles like freshly popped Champagne. Other bespoke features include a brass Amuneal bar and screens covered in a fabric by Clarence House.

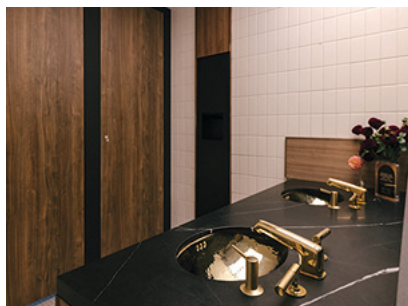
Of course, the room's second lease on life calls for a new name. It's now the Keebler J. Straz Lounge, named after a managing director on the Met's board who generously funded the project. Naturally, the luxe lounge is accessible only to Metropolitan Opera sponsor members. Still, it's an entrance fee that's well worth it, according to Straz, who notes that the redesign "symbolizes our commitment to nurturing a new generation of enthusiasts and patrons." It's a sentiment that the Gachots also feel as longtime supporters of the arts. "As New Yorkers, we all have a responsibility to our institutions," Christine says. "So please come out, and please take advantage of this great city that we live in!" There's never been a chicer room from which to do just that. ■

PROJECT PARTNERS: ABC STONE, AMUNEAL, ARTEMEST, BENDHEIM, BOBBICK, CREATIVE MATTERS, ÉLITIS, FABRICUT, HUDSON VALLEY LIGHTING GROUP, PRECISION STONE, ROCHE BOBOIS, WATERWORKS

PROMOTION

ELLE DECOR GOES TO THE METROPOLITAN OPERA

On September 17, *Elle Decor* unveiled the highly anticipated re-design of the Keebler J. Straz Lounge at the Met Opera, by the esteemed, A-List design firm GACHOT. Over 150 guests enjoyed a performance by members of the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, followed by an official ribbon-cutting ceremony of the elegantly redesigned room. This collaboration highlights a commitment to the arts and beautifully exemplifies the intersection of art and design.



From top left: Asad Syrkett, Christine Gachot, John Gachot, Dana Shihab, Pierre Berardo, Cindy Susilo, Emma Costello, Joan Richardson, Lim Farfel, Elizabeth Graziolo, Rayman Boozer, Sheila Bridges, Keebler J. Straz, Kaja Burke-Williams, Eleomar Cuello, Delia Kenza, Jean Liu, Young Huh, Bebe Howarth, Shawn Henderson, Annalisse Taft-Gersten, custom matchbooks, bathroom partitions by Bobrick and counter, sink and fixtures by Waterworks, lamp from Artemest.