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Salon Society

In a Paris pied-à-terre with tailored interiors by Sarah Dray, gallerist Drew Aaron pairs blue-chip art with works by the emerging talents he believes will define the next generation

By **IAN PHILLIPS** Photography by **STEPHAN JULLIARD**



In Drew Aaron's Paris apartment, which was designed by Sarah Dray, a screen print by Jean-Michel Basquiat surmounts a sofa from her furniture collection and an Emma Donnersberg table set with decorative pieces from Chahan Gallery, all situated atop a Diurne rug. OPPOSITE: A Jeff Koons vase punctuates the kitchen's Calacatta Oro marble-top table by Dray, who also created the alabaster-and-bronzed-metal chandelier, which hangs over Homn chairs. For details see Sources.





A screen print by Jean-Michel Basquiat greets visitors in the entry, where a travertine table by Beije Avenue is topped with a sculpture by Eleanor Lakelin. The towering sconce is from the Sarah Dray Collection, and the floor pattern is in Paloma marble, travertine, and metal.

When Drew Aaron began collecting art in his early twenties, he gravitated toward established names

such as George Condo, Gerhard Richter, and Yayoi Kusama. A small Pablo Picasso portrait of a woman even hung in the entry hall of his former New York home. Over time, however, his eye started shifting toward emerging artists—a passion he now champions at Gallery Red, which he founded in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. “He has a good instinct for spotting new talent,” says Sarah Dray, the interior designer whom Aaron enlisted to transform his Paris pied-à-terre into a setting for both his collection and daily life.

With Dray’s input, Aaron installed compositions by several up-and-coming names in the 1,600-square-foot space on the right bank of the Seine. In the kitchen hangs a black-and-white print by Barcelona artist Andrea Torres Balaguer, whose work Aaron discovered a decade ago. Her enigmatic images—often self-portraits in glamorous attire with the face obscured by painterly brushstrokes—caught the attention of Dior, which commissioned her to photograph its 2023 Cruise collection.

In the corridor is a brightly hued abstract work by Australian artist Jonny Niesche. Aaron kept it in storage for years, waiting for the right setting. Dray’s serene interiors felt like the perfect backdrop. “It needed a neutral space, because it’s a very bold piece,” he says.

The guest bedroom, meanwhile, features a whimsical painting by South Korean artist Miju Lee of four figures from different cultures with a plate of candy-colored macarons—“a fun twist for Paris,” Aaron says.

The apartment’s public rooms are reserved for blue-chip masterpieces. A monumental Jean-Michel Basquiat, the 1982 *Cabeza*, greets visitors in the entry hall above a travertine console whose fluted legs echo the wall paneling nearby. Another Basquiat anchors the living room beneath the decorative plaster ceiling Dray designed after historical precedent, joined by a floral screen print by Andy Warhol—an artist who holds particular significance for Aaron.

He still recalls a school trip to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where he chanced upon one of Warhol’s paintings of a soup can. “I expected to see nothing but Old Masters and was immediately grabbed by that image,” he recalls. “It was the beginning of my love of contemporary art.”

What began as a hobby eventually became a second career. Aaron spent his early professional life in paper



FROM TOP: Designer Sarah Dray and Aaron in his living room, which is enhanced by an artwork by Andy Warhol. In Aaron’s office, Russell Young’s painting of Brigitte Bardot is displayed next to a sconce by Atelier Daniel Gallo.



FROM LEFT: In a hallway, a Damien Hirst dot painting is displayed near a color gradient work by Australian artist Jonny Niesche. The primary bath's custom vanity is in travertine and oak veneer, and the sink and shower fittings are by Hotbath. OPPOSITE: In the primary bedroom, a painting by Adam Taylor hangs on a wall upholstered in an Elastron fabric. The bed is dressed in Lissoy linens, the sconce is by Lumeers, the lamp is by Gilles&Boissier, and the curtains are of a Casamance fabric.

procurement, founding The Aaron Group with his father before selling the business to Konica Minolta in 2017. That's when he moved from New York to Mallorca. "I wanted to raise our children in nature," he says. "Mallorca is a wonderful place to be all year round."

His retirement lasted about a week. "I got very bored very quickly," he admits. He soon launched Lionsgate Capital, a luxury financing firm, before turning his attention to the art world. Gallery Red opened in 2018 on Palma's Plaza Frederic Chopin and has since made its mark on Spain's contemporary art scene. Today, Aaron owns eight different spaces on the square, five of which operate as galleries.

As Gallery Red expanded, Paris was the obvious next step. "I've always loved the city and am obsessed with its architecture," Aaron says. "Plus, it's really emerged as the art hub of Europe." The apartment doubles as a home—he spends about a dozen days there a month—and a discreet salon where he meets collectors, architects, and interior designers.

Dray knew the space intimately: Before Aaron purchased it, it had served as her own office and was still under renovation

during his first visit. "That meant that I could finalize the project according to his needs," she says. "He told me, for instance, that he only needed two bedrooms. So I turned a third space into an office."

He also insisted on keeping a few of the prototypes from her debut furniture collection, which launched in September. They include the Cylinder sofa in the living room as well as the alabaster and bronzed-metal Dual chandelier above the dining table. The remainder reflects Dray's restrained approach, pairing a muted palette and richly textured natural materials with Haussmannian details, such as a marble fireplace, parquet floors, rhythmical cornices, and paneled walls. "Sarah has the ability to immediately give any space a feeling of Parisian drama but in a very subtle way," Aaron says. "She's wonderful at keeping things light, bright, and expansive."

Aaron's enthusiasm for art has proved contagious. Dray has since acquired a Torres Balaguer self-portrait for herself—one with the photographer's hair swept in a bun. "It speaks to me on every level," Dray says. "I love the woman, the outfit, the updo. It's exactly how I had my hair done for my wedding." □

