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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF BEVOLO GAS AND ELECTRIC LIGHTS; PRESTON SCHLEIBUSCH/COURTESY OF PORCELANOSA; JOSHUA KILGUS/LEFT; DAVE BURK/HEDRICH BLESSING PHOTOGRAPHERS; JOSHUA McHUGH

The Manhattan office of decorator Brian J. McCarthy (pictured below) features a conference room outfitted with an array of choice art and furnishings. A chandelier custom made by Patrice Dangel is suspended above a pair of bespoke tables; the tiered bookshelves are in the style of McCarthy's mentor, Albert Hadley.

THE LUXURY LAB

At his elegantly appointed office in midtown Manhattan, designer Brian J. McCarthy concocts exquisite interiors for his discerning clientele

Stepping into the fifth-floor Manhattan offices of interior designer Brian J. McCarthy, having left behind the cacophony of midtown below, one immediately feels transported to a calming world of order and grace. Grandly scaled, with nine rooms set within 3,500 square feet, the suite is an apt stage for the genial AD100 talent, who creates refined interiors for a devoted roster of international clients.

"It has that wow factor," he says, recalling his excitement upon first seeing the space six years ago. Its pièce de résistance is a conference room with 22-foot ceilings

and a double-height bay window that juts out over West 57th Street. There's also a supersize fireplace, constructed in situ by the Paris studio Atelier Mériquet-Carrère with mirrored marquetry inspired by Jean-Michel Frank. "This space is all about seduction," notes McCarthy, who meets with clients around the room's two square neo-classical tables, taking homeowners on a tour of their future interiors using a range of models, swatches, and samples.

The decorator, who worked for the venerable design firm Parish-Hadley from 1983 to '91 (starting out as Albert Hadley's assistant before becoming a



GROOMING BY MEGAN LANOUX FOR EXCLUSIVE ARTISTS MANAGEMENT, USING KEYVYN AUCCOIN

DESKSIDE



business partner in 1989), is known for eclectic, tailored, and warmly inviting rooms with an emphasis on lush wall treatments, fabrics, and furniture. A recent visit to his offices showcased sketches and photographs of current projects, including a 70,000-square-foot Gstaad retreat where a multistory basement contains a faithful reproduction of an 18th-century Turkish hammam (complete with a caldarium, tepidarium, sauna, pool, and marble-lined massage room) plus a disco and beer hall. McCarthy commissioned artist Claude Lalanne to create bronze sconces, railings, and a theatrical staircase for the residence—all in her signature vocabulary of whimsical twigs, butterflies, and birds. “They’re nothing short of amazing,” the decorator says.

While leading project walk-throughs, McCarthy can reach into a glossy black cabinet that turns out to be a jewel box of handsome samples: faux shagreen in shades of turquoise; mother-of-pearl inlay; verre églomisé; even a leather version of Jean-Michel Frank’s famous gouged-oak pattern.

Also interspersed throughout the office are prototypes for furniture McCarthy conceived with longtime collaborators, from the design duo the Campana Brothers to master craftsman William P. Sullivan. Pieces entirely of McCarthy’s own creation can likewise be



found in every direction. One particularly fine example is a folding chair he made for a client who was dissatisfied with a pair she had bought at the 2009 Christie’s auction of the Yves Saint Laurent collection. She asked McCarthy to devise a more comfortable alternative. His solution is a chic seat with a brass handle and a locking mechanism. Atelier Violet in Brooklyn produced two sets for the client: one in cerused black for her home on Long Island and the other in white oak for her place in Palm Beach, Florida.

To make space for his trove of decorative-arts reference books, McCarthy fashioned a pair of pyramid-shaped shelves that flank the conference room’s fireplace. “They’re an homage to Albert,” McCarthy says, referring to a similar design by his late mentor.

Clockwise from far left: Sketches of McCarthy’s current projects are displayed in a niche, above examples of paneling, fabrics, and other decorative details. A painting by Chris Dorland hangs in a corner of the conference room, where a Campana Brothers low table mingles with an eclectic mix of chairs. The drawers of an ebony cabinet contain a host of material samples.

Each one is topped with a mercury-glass sphere. (McCarthy also uses such orbs in fanciful table centerpieces, anchored by Sullivan-made bronze collars.)

Comically, McCarthy apologizes for the disarray in his private office, adjacent to the conference room, even though everything is arranged to a tee. Indeed, order also reigns at his nearby home, which he shares with his business partner and longtime boyfriend, Daniel Sager. “It’s a 90-second commute,” quips McCarthy, who credits Sager with keeping him grounded in the face of his breakneck globe-trotting. Sager, meanwhile, describes McCarthy as “a whirling dervish—ever in motion,” adding, “Nothing’s ever quite perfect enough.”

Another source of comfort for McCarthy is the couple’s sweet-natured poodle mix, Daisy, who follows her dapper master around the office, usually with one of many chew toys in her mouth. The pampered pooch has multiple beds both here and at home, seeming to enjoy a canine version of the luxury afforded to McCarthy’s clientele. And why not? After all, he says, “She’s the most important thing in our lives.” bjmnc.com —CHRISTOPHER MASON