

lifestyle

by Laura Beach

Photography by Ellen McDermott

The Landises
entryway.

American Impressionism in a New York Townhouse

“Collecting is a shared passion,”

—Ken Landis says of the pastime he enjoys with his wife, Rosalind.

“I’m from Edinburgh, so Robert Adam is the gold standard for me,” says Rosalind Landis, recalling the day six years ago that she and her husband, Ken, happened upon a 1921 Manhattan townhouse whose neoclassical details instantly reminded her of Scotland’s most famous architect and the leader of the classical revival movement in eighteenth-century England.

The purchase of the five-story, limestone-faced dwelling designed by Lucian E. Smith, an Illinois-born architect who studied at the American Academy in Rome before briefly working with Cass Gilbert (1859–1934), marked the beginning of a rewarding journey during which the Landises honed their collection of eighteenth-century English and French furniture and Chinese export porcelain, and developed a passion for paintings by American artists who lived and worked in France at the turn of the twentieth century.

“This house had the right configurations for our needs and was in very good condition. Nevertheless, it required a great deal of work,” recalls Rosalind, who approached the project with the same talent and determination she displayed as president of Bobbi Brown Cosmetics, Inc., the company she and Ken co-founded in 1990 with Brown, a friend and former freelance makeup artist. (Estée Lauder acquired the business in 1995.)

On a holiday shopping trip to London, where the Landises met years earlier, the collectors bought their first antiques for their new house, whose ample interiors, remodeled by Beringer Architects of New York, are bathed in soft light and accented with medallions, swags, and urns. Well-placed alcoves and niches, some added at the couple’s request, hold sculpture.

“*Adam Style* by Steven Parissien and *The Work of Robert Adam* by Geoffrey Beard inspired our interior design,” says Rosalind, who, in collaboration with W. D. Interiors of Greenwich, Connecticut, chose for the existing entryway ceiling a palette of Adam-inspired mineral green, blue, ochre and cream, colors she remembered from childhood, from places such as Oxenford Castle, modernized by Adam in 1780, and Hopetoun House, the site of several exuberant Scottish balls that she attended as a girl.

At Chesney’s, the famed London supplier of antique chimney-pieces, the Landises found for their entrance hall an eighteenth-



In the entryway, *Waterfall*, American painter Gifford Beal’s (1879–1956) oil on canvas of 1909, captures the dynamism of the cascading current. The couple paired it with *Le Crépuscule* by Emile-Andre Boisseau (1842–1923), a carved marble from their collection of work by late 19th-century French sculptors. The circa-1780 George III carved and giltwood demilune side table with breche-violet marble top shows the influence of Robert Adam, Rosalind Landis’s favorite historic designer.

century English carved fireplace surround, inset with delectable toffee-colored sienna marble panels. For the living room, a floor above, they bought a neoclassical English statuary marble chimneypiece. “We were very nervous about the chimneypieces fitting, but they were perfect,” says Ken, an investor who is COO of the Accessory Network Group.

Before the shopping spree was over, the Landises had also acquired a George III breakfront bookcase of lustrous mahogany and a circa-1770 Hepplewhite linen press from Adrian Butterworth of Butterworth & Zock Ltd. The London dealer in English furniture, who continues to advise the Landises, led them to the perfect overmantel mirror for above the mantel in the entryway, a circa-1770 borderglass example discovered at Ossowski, the Pimlico Road specialists in eighteenth-century gilt mirrors, carvings, and furniture. A similar collaboration with Abby Taylor and Vincent Vallarino of the Greenwich Gallery in Greenwich, Connecticut,

In the entrance hall, an 18th-century English carved chimneypiece of statuary and sienna marble is paired with a circa-1770 English giltwood borderglass overmantel mirror in the manner of London craftsman John Linnell (d. 1796). After some trial and error, Rosalind Landis decided on the circa-1880 French gold-plate pierced-ball andirons. Their robust scale and patterned surface harmonize with the chimneypiece and mirror. The Sultanabad carpet is circa 1900.

resulted in the couple’s collection of American impressionist and Boston School paintings.

“Starting a collection is not like studying art history,” says Rosalind, who earned a master’s degree from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, studied fine art and antiques at Sotheby’s Institute in London, and once contemplated a career in the arts. “You don’t know where you are going when you begin collecting. You just know that you must love a piece to live with it.”

Both husband and wife were instinctively drawn to the American painter Frederick Carl Frieseke (1874–1939), who arrived in Paris in 1898 and briefly studied with James Abbott McNeill Whistler before becoming a central figure in the Giverny art colony after 1906. One of the collectors’ favorite possessions, Frieseke’s *After the Bath*, a postimpressionist treatment of a dramatically cropped nude, hangs over the living room fireplace.



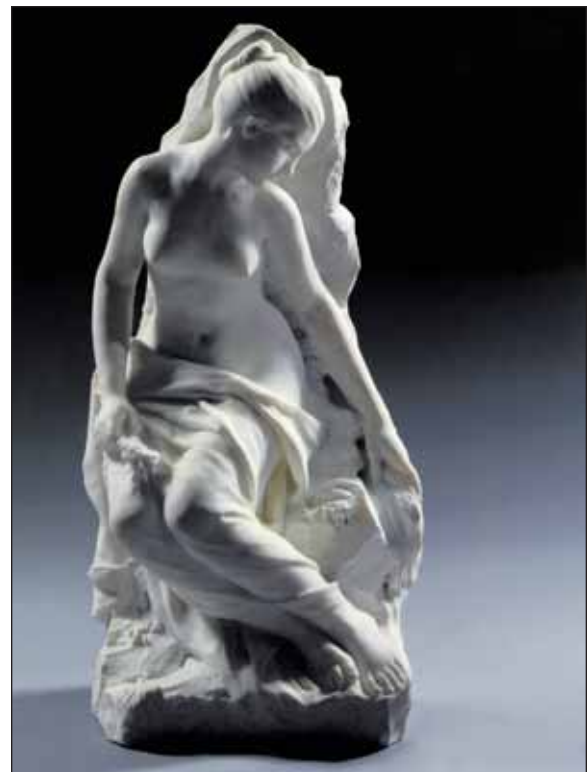
Woman in Green, ca. 1912 by Anna Parkman Osgood (1865–1935) is one of many Boston-School paintings in the couple’s collection.

The collectors created a niche to house *Diane*, a bronze by Alexandre Falguière (1831–1900), a late-19th-century French master of academic realism. *La Pompadour*, left, of 1951, is among several Henri Matisse lithographs that came from Hubert Gallery in New York, a specialist in French modernist works on paper.



“Ken and Rosalind have always had their own opinions, but they’re interested in learning more. If we gave them material to read, they mastered it overnight. They have become very knowledgeable. We have a real exchange of ideas and a relationship of mutual respect,” says Abby Taylor, describing what might be the ideal client. With the couple’s affinity for Frieseke in mind, Vallarino and Taylor presented their clients with *Monet’s Giverny: An Impressionist Colony* (1993) by art historian William H. Gerdts. “It greatly influenced our collecting,” says Rosalind, who prizes the sense of intimacy and masterfully rendered light that characterizes many of the views of beautiful women in contemplation that grace the walls of the Landis home. In the living room, three painters who admired each other in life continue their conversation on canvas. Hanging opposite Frieseke’s *Bath* is *Reverie* by Richard Edward Miller (1875–1957), a circa 1910–15 portrait of a reposing woman. Nearby is *Giverny Garden*, painted in energetic dashes by Louis Ritman (1889–1963) in Frieseke’s garden. Complementing the Ritman painting is famille rose porcelain of a similar pastel palette and the same broken brushwork. The warm tone of the room is further enhanced by gilded and inlaid satinwood French and English furniture. A pale Aubusson carpet of 1840 pulls it all together. Rosalind

Volubilis (Morning Glory) by Alfred Boucher (1850–1934), ca. 1895 is of a sensual female nude emerging from a roughly hewn marble block. It is carved in three-quarter relief, a method exploited not only by Boucher’s contemporary Rodin, but originally by Michelangelo.



One of the first antiques the couple purchased after buying their 1921 townhouse was this circa-1760 George III mahogany breakfront bookcase with its original pediment and brasses. The bookcase, along with the Regency carved wood and water gilded torchère of circa 1805 and the circa 1820 chinoiserie girandole, came from London dealer Adrian Butterworth. Much of the 18th-century Chinese blue and white porcelain is from Lynda Willauer Antiques of Nantucket and Greenwich.



sighs, “The carpet is not the most practical but it just had to be.”

Two intimate Friesseke watercolors join two works by Louis Kronberg (1872–1965) in the master bedroom, a cool study in soft blue and oyster white. “It’s just so dreamy,” Rosalind says of her favorite of the two Kronbergs, *Repose*, a pastel on canvas nude executed in 1909 by the Boston-born painter who spent much of his career in France.

“We never set out to collect Boston School portraits but these strong, handsome women make such nice company,” says Rosalind, leading her guests into a dining room lined in crimson colored cut-velvet, a wall covering manufactured from a sample in Scalamandre’s archives. With the lights dimmed and the circa-1850 English cut-crystal chandelier, from Florian Papp, lit, it is easy to imagine the Boston salon of the Brahmin doyenne of the same era, Isabella Stewart Gardner.

More traditional than the Giverny circle, Boston School painters like Edmund Tarbell (1862–1938) and Frank Benson (1862–1951) painted psychologically acute portraits, often of women in interior settings, that owe as much to



Frederick Carl Friesseke’s *After The Bath*, ca. 1922, a favorite of the collectors, center and left, is one of many works they acquired from the Greenwich Gallery. The Louis XVI giltwood open armchair dates to the late 18th century. The living room’s warm palette is underscored by the circa-1840 French Aubusson carpet.

Vermeer as Monet. “The textures, the color, and the light make this painting very special,” Vincent Vallarino says of *The Old Fashioned Gown*, a moody study in gold and lavender by Tarbell-student Mary Rosamond Coolidge (1884–1978) that hangs in the dining room. Nearby hang portraits by Mary Bradish Titcomb (1856–1927), another important Boston painter; Ivan Gregorewitch Olinsky (1878–1962), and Pauline Lennards Palmer (1867–1938).

“In time we felt a need for texture and dimension,” says the couple, explaining their interest in sculpture. They were drawn to the female form in



Reverie by Richard Edward Miller (1875–1943), center, joins works by other Giverny colony artists in the Landis living room. The circa 1910–1915 oil on canvas remained in a private French collection until 2003. Set with Chinese porcelains, a George III kingwood veneered sofa table attributed to Gillows of Lancaster, England (right) has rare downswept “hockey-stick” legs. The painted cream and green upholstered stool, center, is also by Gillows.

bottom, right: *Luxembourg Gardens #1* by Helen Bruce (b. 1881). Oil on canvas.

bottom, left: *Luxembourg Gardens #2* by Helen Bruce (b. 1881). Oil on canvas.

Post impressionist artist Helen Bruce was born in Boston and studied with William Merritt Chase in New York. She and her husband, Patrick Henry Bruch, became leading intellectuals among the Parisian avant-garde.

late-classical French sculpture that, like the paintings the Landises own, suggests the first fluttering of modernism. The Landis collection contains marble and bronze sculptures by Emile-Andre Boisseau (1842–1923), Jean Alexander Falguière (1831–1900), and Alfred Boucher (1850–1934). *Volubilis*, a naturalistically carved marble nude by Boucher, “is a timeless work by one of the great sculptors of the turn of the century,” says Abby Taylor.

In matters of taste the Landises usually agree. But not always. “I was floored,” confesses Rosalind, recalling Ken’s initial objection to *The Chocolate Girl* by Henri Guilleme Schlesinger (1814–1893). She acknowledges that, with its early date of 1873, the oil on canvas by the French artist was a bit of a departure for them. Ken grew to appreciate the portrait of the young pantry maid with a mischievous glint in her eyes that now hangs in their cozy, antique-pine paneled study.

The couple’s most recent acquisition is *Woman in Kimono, Giverny*, ca. 1908–1909, by Edmund Greacen (1876–1949).



The dappled light of spring is rendered in a blur of brisk strokes in this circa-1913 view of the Giverny garden of fellow artist Frederick Carl Frieseke (1874–1939) by the Russian-born American painter Louis Ritman (1889–1963). Several pieces of famille rose from the couple’s extensive collection of Chinese export wares complement the painting. The Irish inlaid satinwood demilune console table of circa 1790–1800 is one of a pair.

FOLLOWING SPREAD:

The dining room was designed with romantic, candlelit evenings in mind. Against a backdrop of cut-velvet hang Boston School portraits, most of them by women artists. An English cut-crystal 18-light chandelier of circa 1850 illuminates a Chippendale-style dining table, set with a pair of Sheffield four-light candelabra of circa 1790. Above the mantel hangs *The Old Fashioned Gown*, by May Rosemond Coolidge (1884–1978), ca. 1910–1912.



The sophisticated image, *Lady in a Red Jacket* by Boston School artist Mary Bradish Titcomb (1858–1927), ca. 1922, hangs in the dining room.



Oscar Miller's (1867–1921) *Lady with a Fan*, ca. 1900, is one of the nearly dozen paintings in the dining room that exhibits images of women painted by female artists.







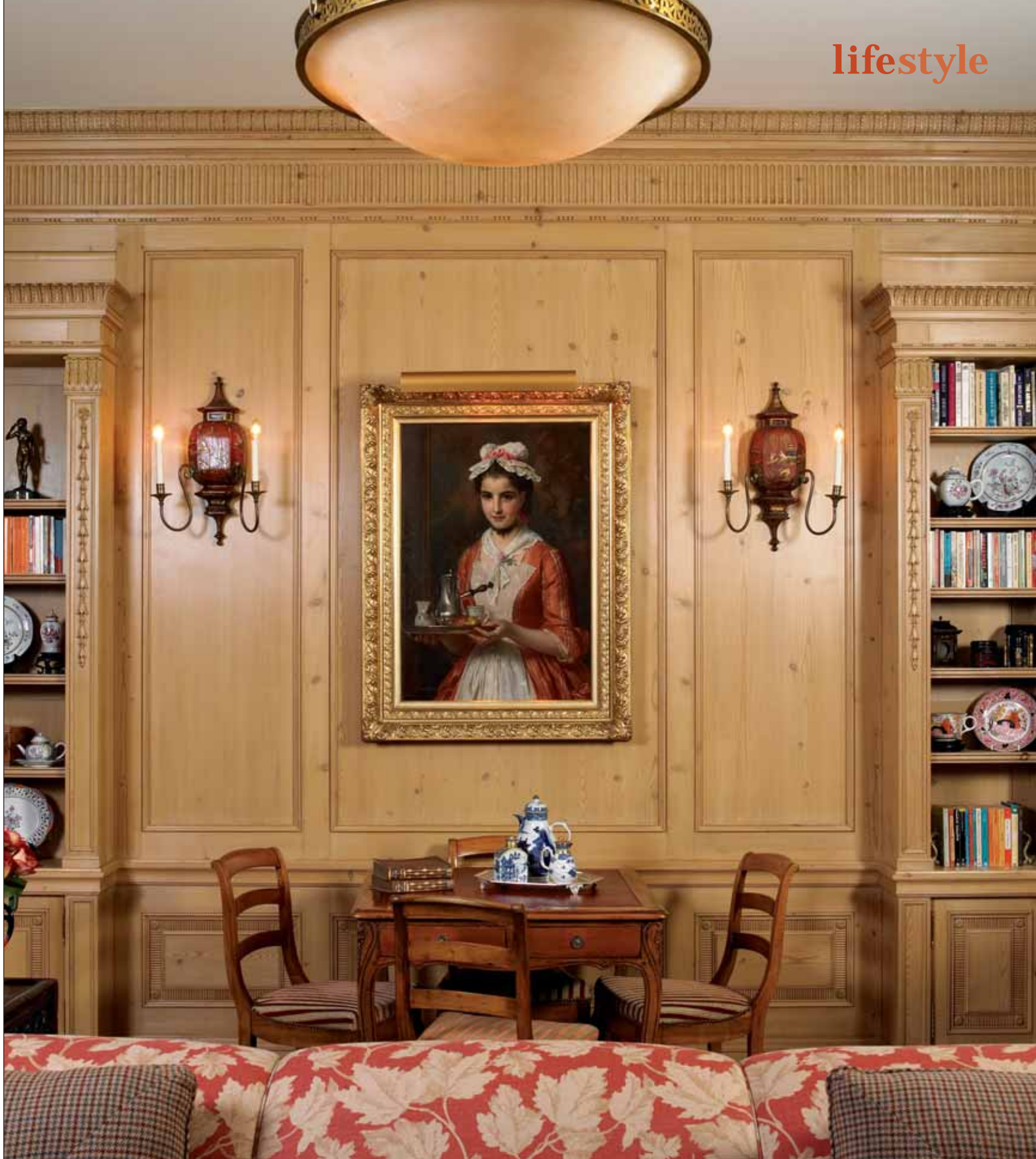
"I want it near me so that I can see it when I wake up," Rosalind Landis says of Louis Kronberg's (1872–1965) *Nude in Repose* situated in the couple's bedroom. The mid-18th century lacquered commode is Italian, the circa-1900 alabaster lamp is French and one of a pair. The circa-1780 English carved giltwood stool shows the influences of French rococo design. The collectors commissioned the bed after a design by Robert Adam. The Chinese porcelain figure of a deity dates to the 18th-century and is one of a pair.

La Toilette, an intimately scaled watercolor on paper by Frieseke, begs closer inspection in the master bedroom. The painting was owned by Jane Peterson (1876–1965), best known for her postimpressionistic views of Gloucester and Cape Ann on Boston's North Shore.

The Landis collection is almost complete. These days, only a spectacularly rare or special painting or sculpture will tempt the collectors, who continue to look for a Gainsborough chair and an inlaid satinwood serving tray for the living room, and who may replace a few pieces of furniture in the dining room.

"Collecting is such an accidental, happy thing. As a hobby, it's been pure delight for us," says Rosalind. Whether building a business or a collection, this art-loving couple believes that collaborating with experts makes all the difference. @





"It's one of the few pieces on which Ken and I initially disagreed," Rosalind Landis says of Henri Guillaume Schlesinger's (1814–1893) *The Chocolate Girl*, an oil on canvas of 1873, the centerpiece in the study made classically English by the addition of antique burnished-pine paneling, a leather Chesterfield sofa, a drum table, and a fire fender. A French Regence walnut game table and a pair of chinoiserie sconces complete the picture.