

CHRISTIE'S

# INTERIORS

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NEW YORK



# STYLE *Transformation:*

The journey of two chairs from outdated to awe-inspiring

A frayed or unfashionable exterior doesn't necessarily mean the end of the line for a well-loved classic. Christie's Interiors recently teamed up with luxury fabric distributor Beacon Hill and the premiere upholsterers at Martin Albert Interiors to put this theory to the test. Their results prove what's possible when you combine beautiful design and top-quality fabrics with artisanal expertise and a little imagination...



## BEFORE:

Antique French chairs from antique dealer Amy Perlin's estate, in their original condition.



## AFTER:

Finished slipcovers in two different styles transform the chairs.

LOT 482 A Pair Of French Linen-Upholstered Small Bergeres, 20th century together with a pair of paisley linen slipcovers and a pair of striped linen slipcovers  
**\$300-500**



1



2



3

1. Michael Rakhlin, restorer for Michael Rakhlin, LTD Interiors, strips one of the chairs.

Upholstery Studio credits: Martin Albert Interiors, c/o Albert Harary, 257 West 39th Street, New York, NY 10018

2. Mr. Pena and Mr. Harary drape the wool and linen slipcover fabric over the chair.

3. One of the upholstered chairs resplendent in Natural Linen by Beacon Hill.

Available to the trade only, Beacon Hill fabrics can be ordered through [www.beaconhilldesign.com](http://www.beaconhilldesign.com) or 1 800 333 3777

Restorer credits: Michael Rakhlin LTD, 119 Ingraham Street Suite 208, Brooklyn, NY 11237

Beacon Hill's Director of Fabric Design, **Alexis Audette**, offers expert advice about upholstery and slipcovers, and talks us through the process of restoring these antique French chairs to highly desirable works of art.

What excited you about these chairs and how did you know they were ripe for "reinvention"?

I loved these chairs because of their beautiful lines. They are a prime example of unique objects of great quality that you can find at a Christie's Interiors sale. Because of their unusual small scale, the chairs can be used in a setting where space is limited, such as an alcove or a small bedroom.

Tell us about the fabric you selected for the re-upholstery.

We wanted a versatile look that could work well in a traditional or contemporary interior. Given the current demand for natural and sustainable materials, I selected Beacon Hill's *Natural Linen* fabric in a flax color called *Linen*. Certified organic, this beautiful Belgian textile has the necessary weight for upholstery.

Why are slipcovers important, and what have you chosen here?

Slipcovers are essentially "clothing for furniture." They can lend a whole new personality to a room, to reflect a new season, trend or even mood. Of course, a more practical purpose is to extend the life of a piece of upholstery.

The short, corner pleated slipcover is a tailored and casually elegant design. I chose Laurel Stripe in Frost, a blend of linen and Egyptian cotton which combines the texture and strength of linen with the softness of cotton. The stripes are ideally suited to the small-scale chairs, and they help create an updated, contemporary look.

The more formal, traditional of the two slipcovers I call a "frog eye" design, referring to the decorative *passanterie* that secures the pleat on the chair back and is repeated on the legs in the front. The fabric is a wool and linen blend from Italy called *Ashland* in a color known as *Driftwood*. Mixing wool with linen creates a more durable textile with a crisp, sculptural quality.

How should one go about selecting a fabric?

Seek expert advice. Interior designers have the training and experience to know what types of fabric and what colors and patterns will work best in your interior space. Another option is to seek advice from a good upholsterer. For this project, we selected Al Harary of Martin Albert Interiors because we know him to be a superb artisan.

Beacon Hill fabrics are sold exclusively to interior designers. We design singular and bespoke fabrics, and work with boutique textile mills around the world. We specialize in natural fibers, including silk, wool and linen. The designers who purchase our fabrics consider usage and the kind of frame to be upholstered, and also fabric weight

and texture. An additional consideration is color and pattern scale and type. If the sofa will be used daily, they'll choose a fabric with high durability. For a lighter look, linen and linen blends are durable and easy to clean. A more delicate fabric, such as silk, won't stand up to daily use but is a good choice for a decorative bench or occasional chair.

Designers have additional considerations when selecting fabric for slipcovers. The material must drape well over the upholstered piece, much like a coat or jacket. Slipcovers in lighter weight, made with more casual fabrics like linen or cotton blends, lend themselves to more relaxed living during summer months. Natural fibers, such as cotton or linen in neutral colors, are very much on-trend right now. Slipcovers can also provide a way to try out different motifs and colors, such as a bold bohemian ikat or a muted and romantic floral.

What advice would you offer to someone preparing to embark upon an upholstery project of their own?

To achieve great results, take the time to do the research, check references and select your upholsterer carefully. They should see your piece of furniture in person; if this isn't possible, at least take pictures to show them.

What advantages does this process offer over the retail experience?

A custom upholstered piece is the equivalent of a couture gown, and participating in the creative process makes the personal investment even stronger.

## FROM the Workbench...

Albert Harary, founder of Martin Albert Interiors, provides a brief summary of the custom upholstery process

"First, jute webbing was applied across the seat of the finished frame. Springs were attached to the webbing, then to the frame using a special spring cord with a hand-tied process to ensure maximum comfort and durability. The platform was then attached and padded with horse hair. Next, we applied springs to the back of the chair, using a softer spring than was used on the seat, and attached a down and feather pad covered in muslin. The cushion filling was then wrapped in foam core and encased in down and feather. We had cut and matched the fabric for the upholstery, which was then sewn and tacked to the chair."

# AMY PERLIN ANTIQUES



AMY PERLIN ANTIQUES  
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Amy Perlin's success story is one of many years of hard work and self-education. Perlin's Long Island childhood was not exactly conducive to the realm of the antiquated. The furniture her mother's decorator assembled in their home was shiny new, and colorful flocking abound. "They called us the 'Purple Perlins'," she remembers with a smile.

While Perlin majored in Art and Art History, her real education came by way of an early trip to London. Having learned risk-taking from her father, who started an insurance business from the ground up, Perlin suddenly had the revelation that she could marry her instinct for business to her love of the decorative arts.

In the beginning Perlin was turning found objects into design delights: an usually shaped lamp became a gorgeous gueridon via gilding and a top to rest drinks on. A disco table morphed magically into one fit to host dinner guests around. Cheese rounds and old wood were converted into coffee tables once reconceived by Perlin's limitless imagination.

A flurry of antiques show appearances soon gave

way to a tiny space in the back of a Bridgehampton barn. But even when she had an abundant enough following and the inventory to open another store in Manhattan, Perlin never stopped the hard work.

When there was a decorator Perlin admired, she wrote a letter inviting him or her into the store. She mastered driving a European van's stick shift so that she could most efficiently transport her treasures to decorators' shipping locales. She navigated dark country roads solo in Bordeaux in search of the best and the brightest to bring home.

Her former 10,000 square foot space on 61st street was an eclectic homage to her constant travels to all corners of Europe. One of many of Amy's memorable quotes, "I like strong pieces that show their age." Admire all the beauty, Amy Perlin is a woman who knows at the end of the day, it all comes down to perseverance and the quiet confidence of her eye, about which she told us, "it's all about line and proportion."

Amy Perlin passed away in May of 2010. It is through this endeavor and phenomenal offering that her legacy, passion, and vision is carried on.





487

487  
A PAIR OF WROUGHT IRON SEVEN-LIGHT  
TORCHERES,  
\$800-1,200



552

552  
A FRENCH TAPESTRY-UPHOLSTERED WAL-  
NUT PORTER'S CHAIR,  
\$1,500-2,000



560

560  
AN ITALIAN METAL-BOUND FRUITWOOD  
TRAVELLING TRUNK,  
\$500-700



517

517  
AN ITALIAN WHITE-PAINTED AND PARCEL  
GILT HEXAGONAL LANTERN,  
\$1,500-2,000



527

527  
A CONTINENTAL WALNUT SHIELD-BACK  
ARMCHAIR,  
\$800-1,200



506

506  
A LARGE FRENCH OAK CIRCULAR DINING  
TABLE,  
\$2,500-3,500