



WEB-EXCLUSIVE HOME TOUR

This New York Gallerist's Home Features not One but Two Perfect Fireplaces

The apartment is all about energy, aura, and great works of art

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Photography by Jeff Holt

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"Art is a portal to another dimension," [David Totah](#), curator and founder of Totah, a New York gallery on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, says. As a curator, he looks for art that "takes one to another place." Fittingly, Totah's East Village apartment brims with work by influential artists such as Kenny Scharf and Alighiero Boetti.

Born into a family of collectors, dealers, and gallerists, Totah grew up immersed in the art world. His mother, who is from Lebanon, was drawn to avant-garde pieces, while his Italian father had "impeccable taste." Totah's upbringing made him very sensitive to visual stimulation. "Never tell an artist to use a theme because it is imposing on the work. . ." Totah states.

For his own home, Totah looked for pieces that would maintain the flow of the apartment. Even seemingly inconsequential objects, such as an “air humidifier, would have to please my eye,” he says. For instance, to avoid the visual messiness of chairs, Totah opted for wood benches alongside the dining room table. He seeks balance in spaces, and avoids ornamental elements apart from the authentic molding of his pre-war apartment. While Totah handled the design of the home himself, gallery client [Will Cooper](#) of [Ash NYC](#) helped him find the mushroom-shaped lamp that perches in his dining room.



David Totah’s art collection, which spans the entire apartment, includes from right to left: *Lightbridge 2* by Mara De Luca, *Incandescent Frames (Study 2)* by Laurreta Vinciarelli, *Fuori Registro* by Luca Pancrazzi, and *Yellow Dominant* by Josef Albers. Architect Antonio Citterio designed the simple teal sectional. The 1970s Alanda glass coffee table is by Paolo Piva. The sideboard is midcentury and is by T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbins and the 1960s 099 Sling lounge chair is by Hans Könecke.

Artworks don’t move in and out of his New York apartment with the same frequency as in his gallery. Nonetheless, the design of the abode remains relatively fluid. Objects that disturb the energy of the interiors are replaced. “The pillows must have been rearranged ten times,” Totah says.

For both his gallery and his home, intuition guides decision making. Totah seeks out slow-read art, or art made in a meditative state, for the walls of his apartment. Notably, he has interacted with many of the artists whose work adorns his interiors, and believes that “art is energy and the energy of people who made it.” When he has a visceral reaction to a piece, he meets with its artist whenever possible. Often, he finds that the person who created the work has a similar aura. “I’m really interested in art that steers your soul. I feel that I gravitate toward [pieces] that either contain my vibration or raise it.”