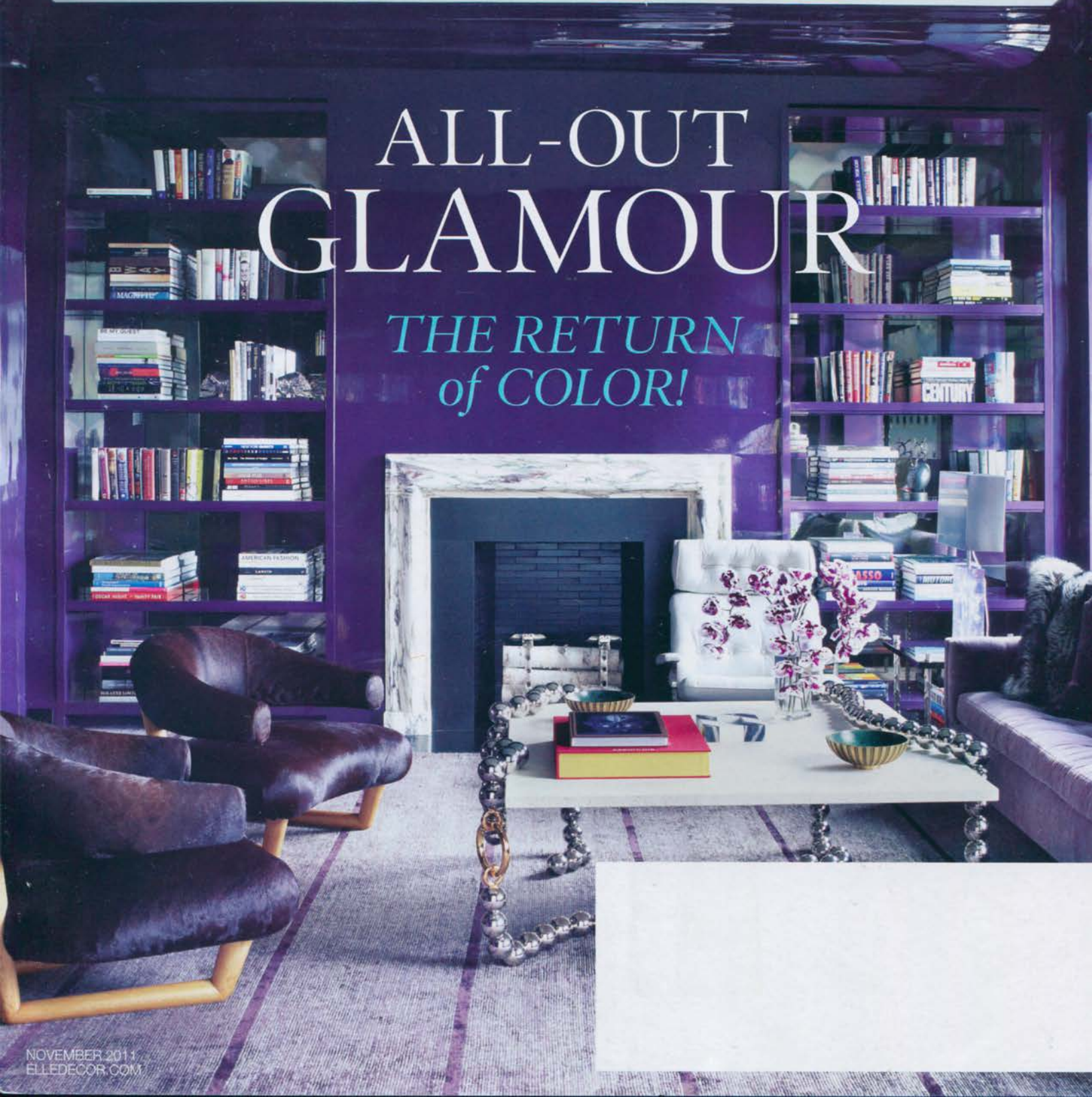


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# BEGINNER'S LUCK

IN PUTTING TOGETHER HER FIRST APARTMENT AS A NEW BRIDE IN NEW YORK CITY, CLAIBORNE SWANSON

Text by Rima Suqi · Photography by Simon Watson · Produced by Cynthia Frank



**FACING PAGE:** Claiborne Swanson Frank in the living room of her Manhattan apartment; the painting is by Russell Christoffersen. **THIS PAGE:** The living room chairs, upholstered in a Rogers & Goffigon linen, are from Mecox Gardens; the sofa is covered in a linen by Travers, and the sofa pillows are by Madeline Weinrib; the ottomans were purchased at Christie's; the rug is by Jonathan Adler; the photographs are by Frank, and the walls are painted in Farrow & Ball's Pointing. See Resources.

FRANK TURNS TO AN EXPERT—HER MOTHER-IN-LAW



"I walked into this apartment on my second date with my husband," recalls Claiborne Swanson Frank of the first time she laid eyes on James Frank's Manhattan home. "He had bought it about a month before, and it was totally empty, not a thing in it. And I said, 'You really need a girlfriend or a wife.'"

Ten months later, after a whirlwind courtship, the couple were engaged and Claiborne moved in—to a construction zone. "One bathroom was done, and they had started work on the kitchen," she remembers. "But the rest of the apartment was plastic-ed off—we couldn't go in the kitchen, living room, or dining room. We lived through a cold New York winter in just one bedroom, which could really make or break a relationship. But it's how I knew I was marrying the right guy."

That guy not only gave her carte blanche to do what she wanted with the 1,300-square-foot, two-bedroom apartment, but he also offered up an excellent resource to aid in the process: his mother. Cynthia Frank—a design-world insider and ELLE DECOR's contributing editor at large—became both a fast friend and a decorating mentor to her