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THE CABLE GUY

Traveling the globe, a guy tends to pick up a thing or two—like an African footstool, an Iraqi keepsake box and a Rwandan model airplane. CNN's **ANDERSON COOPER** shows us his stuff

by ROBIN SAYERS *photographed by* MATTHEW HRANEK



You could call it the Anderson Cooper World Tour 2004. The CNN anchor—he of the piercing blue eyes, silver hair, boyish grin and worshipful Web sites—has given up a quiet Thursday morning to conduct a tour of his New York City loft. On the itinerary: a collection of souvenirs from his many travels. Elvis Lives! ashtrays

from Graceland? Snow globes that play “God Save the Queen”? Not likely. The 37-year-old has been to some of the most far-flung parts of the world and has the goods to prove it. “I found this in a bombed-out building in Bosnia,” Cooper says, retrieving a toy perched high atop a bookshelf. “The big concern was

Cooper in front of a painting he calls *Silences* (artist unknown), which originally hung in his childhood home. Opposite: The kitchen features Carrera marble countertops and a Viking range.



The sharks are killer and so are the chairs, a pair of Alvar Aalto pieces Cooper refinished. As for the 70-inch Sony XBR flat-screen TV, "It's ugly but pretty great," Cooper says.



Left: A silk-screen portrait of Cooper's mom, Gloria Vanderbilt (shot by Francesco Scavullo), hangs in the guest bedroom. Below: Some beloved Hardy Boys books. Right: In the dining area, a portrait of Cooper's maternal grandmother, also named Gloria. "She looks like a flamenco dancer," he notes.



ANDERSON COOPER

picking it up, because it might have been booby-trapped.”

For the time being, he's on safer turf, settled in his career—he's the host of CNN's cutting-edge *Anderson Cooper 360°*—and his life. Two years ago, after looking for a home for himself and his Welsh springer spaniel, Molly (currently at doggy day care), Cooper found this two-bedroom loft in midtown Manhattan. “It was a wreck when I moved in, but I couldn't afford to do anything with it,” says Cooper, padding around in jeans, a T-shirt that reads “Operation Iraqi Freedom,” and bare feet. “But after a year of camping out I decided, This is ridiculous. I have 1,800 square feet, and I'm living in only 300 of it.”

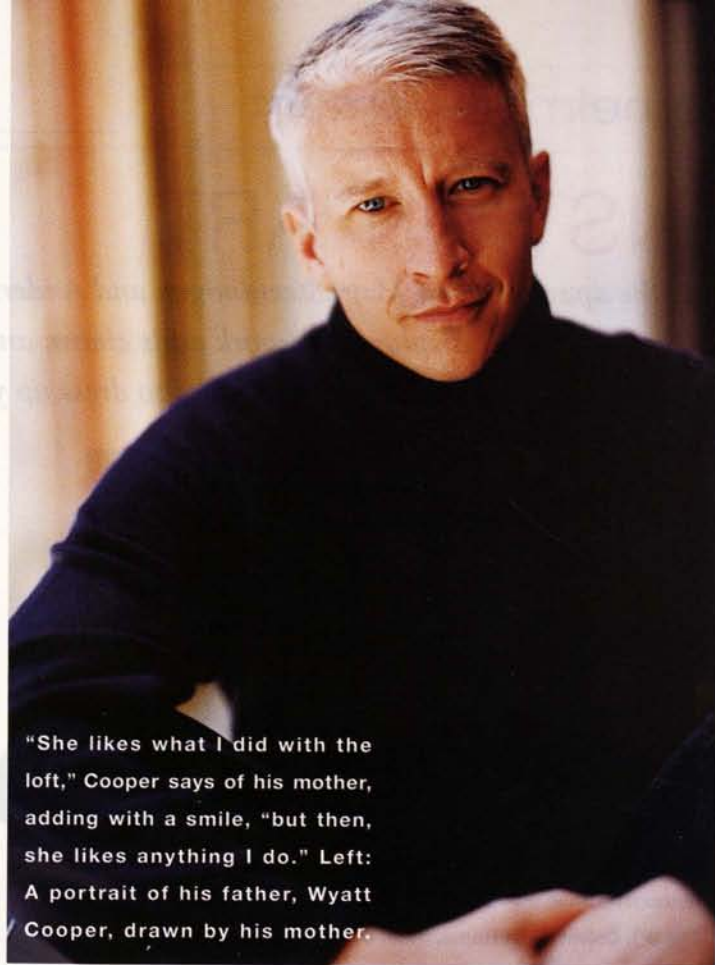
Enter architects Matthew Berman and Andrew Kotchen of Workshop/APD. The former, an old friend of Cooper's, recalls the apartment as “your classic old-school artist's loft, cut up into a series of awkward spaces. It didn't have flow.” Some of the moves made to open the space included moving the kitchen, tearing down several walls, and installing recessed lighting. Then came the decorating. While scouting for carpets downtown, Cooper ran into designer Bradley Stephens of Bradley Stephens Interiors, another pal from his past. “It's funny,” Cooper says, “I basically did what you're not supposed to do, which is work with friends. But they turned out to be talented, creative and responsible.”



Qualities that could be assigned to Cooper himself. After graduating from Yale he studied Vietnamese in Hanoi before signing on as a war correspondent for Channel One, the news network broadcast in classrooms across America. A gig at ABC News came next, followed by two seasons hosting the brainy viewer's reality show *The Mole*. A year later, moved by the events of September 11, he returned to news, landing at CNN and eventually creating his own niche with *360°*.

It's a pretty apropos name for a man whose apartment is filled with artifacts from years of worldwide travel, each with its own remarkable story: intricately carved wooden columns from a palace in India; a prayer reliquary from Guatemala; a toy airplane made by a disabled Rwandan child from Marlboro cigarette cartons and cookie boxes (“I got this a year before the genocide—it makes you wonder what happened to him”); and a lacquered box from Iraq embellished with Saddam Hussein's picture (“I like that they also put his name there, as if you might not know who it is”).

Cooper says he enjoys “being surrounded by things with history.” That's not surprising, really, when you consider his family



“She likes what I did with the loft,” Cooper says of his mother, adding with a smile, “but then, she likes anything I do.” Left: A portrait of his father, Wyatt Cooper, drawn by his mother.

tree. His mother is Gloria Vanderbilt, legendary fashion designer, socialite, author and the great-great-granddaughter of railroad magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt, who was arguably the most powerful man in New York City in the mid-1800s. Sure enough, a rather imposing portrait of the grand man himself hangs in the foyer (“I think he looks mean,” Cooper observes). Anderson's father, writer and actor Wyatt Cooper, is also here in spirit, courtesy of a poster created for a play in Rome in which he appeared in the fifties. And crammed onto the dining room shelves are books from his mom, dad and older brother Carter, who died in 1988—including a 1946 copy of *Don Quixote* with illustrations by Salvador Dalí, and Hardy Boys books that Cooper has kept since childhood. “They make me happy every time I pick one up,” he says. “As a kid I had a mild form of dyslexia, so reading was difficult. A lot of the time I'd pretend to read them but just look at the pictures.”

Dalí and Cervantes sharing space with Frank and Joe: Cooper may be a scion, but he's a refreshingly unpretentious one. Ask him about a recent addition to his apartment—a huge flat-screen television that dominates the living room—and he shrugs it off with an embarrassed smile, explaining, “I know it's ob-scene, but I work in TV, so it's sort of essential.” His description of his neighborhood is equally disarming. “The realtors called it the Dirty 30s, and I thought it meant cool, sexy, dirty,” he says. “Turns out it just means grimy. But I've grown to like the frontier aspect of it.” Somewhere, even Cornelius must be smiling. ■