

OPPOSITES attract

Some houses are like books—you really don't know what they're about until you've looked inside. To the rest of the world, a dowager brownstone on Gramercy Park, a clapboard beach place in Bridgehampton and a vintage farmhouse in Connecticut may be typical of their kind. However, those in residence revel in stylish interiors rich in harmony and surprising contrasts. They will tell you that the perfect mixes don't just happen, but are carefully arranged by design professionals for whom putting together the right combination is an art.



PHOTOS: PETER MARONELLI

On Gramercy Park, a stately Victorian-era townhouse contains a strikingly modern interior. The owners of the late-19th-century brownstone asked Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz to create "a hard-edged residence that was also soft and warm." For the designer, whose work tends toward clean lines and simple patterns, it was the perfect commission.

"The marriage of modern and classical provides the opportunity to mix pieces of various periods," he said. "If they're of the right scale and proportion, you can combine something from Pottery Barn with a precious object that's hundreds of years old." As a result, color and form take precedence over the pedigree of any one piece, and comfort and beauty are naturally aligned.

Noriega-Ortiz's objective with this project was to create a cohesive partnership between shapes and textures, old and new. In the Gramercy Park house, little needed to be done to the Italianate shell. He replaced the wood of the pocket doors with frosted glass, and cleaned up the hardwood floors, as well as the plaster embellishments on the walls, which were key to the finished look.

The sea-foam-green walls, which give off a hint of a glimmer at night, draw attention to the plasterwork, the original fireplace and other structural elements that were in place. They also act as a background to the well-defined lines of the furniture.

CONTINUES



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BENJAMIN NORIEGA-ORTIZ



Opposite page: On Gramercy Park, decorative plasterwork takes center stage in the understated dining room where pocket doors were refitted with glass.

Top: Glowing with natural light, the living room invites relaxation with sleek furniture in a variety of textures and neutral colors.

Above: The ornate Victorian mirror behind the sculptural granite sink adds depth as well as interest to the powder room.

Left: In a living room corner, Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz orchestrated the perfect balancing act between hard and soft, matte and shiny, sleek and swirling.

