

House of Style

TWO YEARS AGO, WHEN WOMEN'S clothing designer Steve Fabrikant and his wife, Nancy, first laid eyes on the East 58th Street apartment that would become their new home, they were not impressed. Despite its East River views, the place looked like a crash pad for a '70s rock star—which it once was. The previous owner, the late singer Freddie Mercury of the group Queen, had covered the walls in silver taffeta, which struck the couple, lovers of prewar classicism, as "the ugliest thing we'd ever seen." Indeed, says their friend and interior designer, Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz, "It was disgusting."

With a degree in architecture, Steve, a native of Rio de Janeiro who moved to New York at 14, had strong ideas about what he wanted. "I hate skinny walls," he says, so Noriega-Ortiz built massive white-pink walls that add a palatial air while imparting a subtle, comforting glow, especially when the sun streams in from the southeast. Noriega-Ortiz also designed all of the oversized contemporary furniture, including a

fabric-covered partition that hugs a pair of white chairs in the living room, creating an intimate space. Steve, known for his innovative knitwear, was personally involved in choosing the fabrics; at one point he even pinned a sample onto a couch as if fitting a model.

Thoughtful touches can be found throughout the apartment, from the custom-designed kitchen (Steve is an avid cook) to the sliding wall between the den and living room. The wall is punctuated with pyramid-shaped studs, which, like all the hardware in the apartment, are nickel-coated.

After seven months of construction, the Fabrikants, including their 19-month-old daughter, finally moved into their 43rd-floor aerie, making Steve's parents, Seventh Avenue veterans themselves, very happy—they live in the same building. Steve and Nancy immediately agreed on which room was their favorite: the spacious, limestone bathroom. "Steve and I pretty much think the same way," says Nancy, who is president of Steve Fabrikant & Co., "which is why we can succeed in our marriage and in business." —*Laura Fisher*



From left: By coincidence, a lampshade Steve Fabrikant already owned matches the silk organza Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz chose for the diaphanous slipcovers on the dining room chairs. "It's great to have a client who collects great things instead of junk," says Noriega-Ortiz, pointing out Steve's antique apothecary jars in the bathroom and his dressmaker's form. Above: Noriega-Ortiz, left, demonstrates the studded sliding wall for Steve and wife Nancy, who's wearing a knit ensemble designed, naturally, by her husband.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS BUCK



Interior designer BENJAMIN NORIEGA-ORTIZ, left, transformed a '70s crash pad into a light-filled oasis for NANCY and STEVE FABRIKANT.