



Benjamin  
Noriega-Ortiz



The New York residence of Steve Fabrikant, an architect turned fashion designer, threads a chromatic scale through a luminous white interior.

SOMETIMES AN INTERIOR BEGS ONE TO WAX POETIC, TO UNLEASH the superlatives, to gush in the worst possible way. Certainly that temptation exists with the Manhattan residence Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz, principal of his namesake New York-based firm, has designed for Steve Fabrikant, a designer of women's wear who trained as an architect, and his family. To succumb to those sirens, however, would be to miss several terrific stories, not least of which is that of the actual process involved in designing this 3,000-sq.-ft. space.

The first tale springs from the awarding of the commission, which went to BNO because one of Noriega-Ortiz's colleagues had gone to architecture school with Fabrikant, a factor that, needless to say, created an unusual comfort level between clients and design firm. As Fabrikant noted, "I'm a frustrated architect and always will be. I think the reason that this project worked so well is that I was trained as an architect, and so was he, so we understood each other. Because he's an interior designer, he knew how to emphasize the architectural quality of the space but also how to soften its edges."

The prequel revolves around the apartment's former owner: when designer and clients first looked at it, it belonged to Freddy Mercury, the now deceased lead singer of Queen, a glitter rock band par excellence. According to Noriega-Ortiz, "The interior was quite a scene when viewed for the first time. The walls were padded and upholstered in silver satin. The shag carpet was shoe deep."

Notwithstanding the egregious existing decor and its rather dark and "dungeony" quality, the Fabrikants liked the apartment's layout and its conspicuous possibilities for light and attractive views (the apartment being on a high floor with exposures on three sides). Noriega reported, "The Fabrikants wanted the interior to be more architectural, to have an expressed structure. They wanted a loft feeling without being downtown. The first problem in the way of achieving this was that the walls were very thin, just five inches thick."

Noriega-Ortiz worked with the original floorplan, which he modified to reinforce its symmetry and to strengthen its axiality. To create a sense of depth, and suggest a pre-war solidity of construc-

*Continued*

*Preceding spread: Two images of the living room suggest the interior as metaphor and as reality. The nickel-studded sliding wall closes off the client's study/home office. The heightened axiality allows for floods of light to sweep through the interior.*

**Custom maple floors:** Lothar Cords. **Paint for walls and ceilings:** Benjamin Moore. **Custom chaise, sofa, lounge chairs, upholstered wall fabrication:** K. Flam Associates. **Chaise fabric:** Clarence House. **Chenille throw:** Myung Jin. **Lounge chairs, sofa fabric:** Manuel Canovas. **Ottoman:** George Smith. **Ottoman, low upholstered wall fabric:** DesignTex. **Grass boxes, orchids:** Floribellium. **Silver tray:** Bergdorf Goodman. **Photo on floor:** Berenice Abbott New York. **Large mirror:** Betty Jane Bart. **Custom console:** Edward R. Butler, Co. **Deco lamp:** David Duncan.

*Opposite: The dining room is awash in light. Fashion inspirations include sheer tutus on the chairs.*

**Biedermeier table, chairs:** Legendary Collections. **Slipcover fabric for Biedermeier chairs:** Jack Lenor Larsen. **Dining chair seat fabric:** J. Robert Scott. **Slipcover fabric:** DesignTex.

*Below: Fabrikant uses this den as a home office; it also doubles as a guest bedroom.*

**Carpet:** Rosecore. **Window treatment, bench and pillow fabrication:** K. Flam Associates. **Window treatment fabric:** Lee Jofa/Groundworks. **Window bench fabric:** Manuel Canovas. **Sleep sofa:** Avery Boardman. **Sleep sofa fabric:** Decorator's Walk. **Pillow fabric:** Donghia. **Robsjohn-Gibbings desk:** Full House. **Center table:** SEE. **Metal lamp:** David Landis Design. **Wall lamp:** Through Lees Studio.

**Photography:** Paul Warchol





The designer derived the copper, green and white color palette from a tapestry the Fabrikants owned. "The sequence of color progresses from the sheer copper tutus on the dining room chairs through the foyer into the living room, which ends in a brocade-upholstered piece in front of the terrace," Noriega-Ortiz explained. The den, separated from the living room by a sliding wall ornamented with nickel studs, was arranged to suit Fabrikant's work habits. Essentially a home office, it doubles as a guest room.

Noriega-Ortiz has a particular love for bathrooms, and expressed it here. The master bathroom displayed a subtle sense of color. Flesh-toned limestone with a flamed finish contrasted with a slick Greek marble. The shower door, a single sheet of glass measuring four ft. by eight ft. and something of a marvel of engineering, was hung from a mere two pivot hinges. "Fabrikant deals with interiors and architecture as if they were dress details. He sketches very, very fast, and he redraws things constantly. The shower door was a perfect example. We had been through several designs, and finally he faxed a perspective of the door and corner detail from the beach, where he and his family were on vacation," said the designer, who also designed custom hardware for the space (*Interior Design*, September 1994). The powder room was laved in an ochre-colored Venetian plaster finish with black counters and sinks.

"Normally, the client doesn't get so involved. In this case, he and his wife scrutinized everything," he concluded. The process worked so well that the two have continued to work together, most recently on Fabrikant's in-store boutique at Bergdorf Goodman, a space borrowing many details from this residence. Clearly, the superlatives are in the details.

JUDITH NASATIR

*Above: The powder room is the only room without windows and the only room with strong color.*

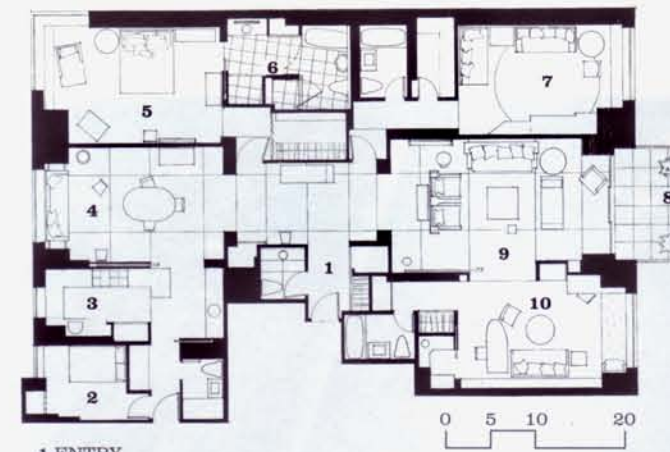
**Mirror:** Yale R. Burge. **Table lamp:** David Landis Design. **Sink:** Laboratory Sink Top.

*Opposite (above): The shower is a feat of engineering, with the large glass sheet held only by two hinges.*

**Shower door:** Architectural Glass Craft. **Custom bath accessories:** BNO Collection through Edward R. Butler. **Antique mirror restoration:** Eli C. Rios.

*Opposite: The master bedroom with a spectacular view incorporates the interior's thematic elements.*

**Carpets:** Rosecore. **Window treatment, bedspread, headboard fabrication:** K. Flam Associates. **Window fabric:** Lee Jofa/Grundworks. **Chaise:** Donghia. **Chaise fabric:** Kirk Brummel. **Throw:** Jeffrey Aronoff. **Bedspread fabric:** Clarence House. **Linens:** Chambers. **Tablecloth, boxspring leather:** Cortina Leather. **Wall lamp:** Nessen Lighting. **Artwork:** Aero Studio.



- 1 ENTRY
- 2 BEDROOM
- 3 KITCHEN
- 4 DINING
- 5 MASTER BEDROOM
- 6 MASTER BATHROOM
- 7 CHILDREN'S ROOM
- 8 BALCONY
- 9 LIVING
- 10 DEN

