

contents

metropolitanhome May/June 2003 Volume XXXV Issue No. 3

- 64 **My House: Memo to My Decorator** by Stephanie Pierson
In which our intrepid homeowner confesses to falling deeply in love with interior design—especially when someone else is doing it for her.
- 138 **A NATURAL SPIRIT** by Fred A. Bernstein
MET HOME OF THE MONTH A Washington State artist transformed his grandfather's small house into a home that celebrates life, recycling and the ineffable self.
- 148 **SHEER TODAY, GAUZE TOMORROW** by Susan Kleinman
With will-o'-the-wisp fabrics and pales-on-pales, Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz brought definition to a well-feathered New York pied-à-terre.
- 156 **MISSION ACCOMPLISHED** by Michael Lassell
In Los Angeles, Koning Eizenberg rebuilt an old house alongside a creek to maximize views and celebrate life in the great outdoors.
- 164 **CRAZY FOR COLOR** by Raul Barreneche
Who's afraid of Roy G. Biv? Not this Manhattan family! For their Park Avenue home, they ordered up over-the-rainbow hues to show off museum-quality contemporary art.
- 172 **WHITE ON!** by Jeff Book
Designer Toby Zack chose a monochromatic hot white palette for a Florida home, and the result is anything but vanilla.
- 200 **The Metropolitan Home Crossword**
Top to bottom, left to right, if you solve this puzzle you're home-design bright.
- GARDEN**
- 178 **LAPS OF LUXURY** by Jane Garney
On a tiny plot in Connecticut, antiques dealer Michael Trapp created an Arcadian swimming pool and grotto.
- FOOD**
- 182 **LOCAL HERO** by Regina Schrambling
Downtown Manhattan chef Peter Hoffman heads to market for perfectly seasonal ingredients all year round.

Mailbag 30 Editor's Page 36 Metro 38 Dr. Swatch 44
Recipes 186 Resources 190

ON THE COVER

A few of our favorite things. For a complete list, see Design 100, beginning on page 79. Photograph by David Prince.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

For information, call 850/682-7654; fax 641/842-6101. E-mail subscription problems and address changes to: methome@neodata.com. (Include your current, complete mailing address in your email.)

A tulip sofa and armchairs by Jean Royère add to the old-Hollywood glamour of the living room. Opposite: A king-size bed in the center of the room is the perfect focal point for the large space—and the perfect place to curl up and watch a movie. At the touch of a button, a projector flips down from the ceiling and the curtains part to reveal a 100-inch screen.

SHEER TODAY GAUZE TOMORROW



IN MANHATTAN,
BENJAMIN NORIEGA-ORTIZ
CONFECTED AN
ETHEREAL PIED-À-TERRE
FOR A YOUNG WOMAN
WHOSE FEET NEVER SEEM
TO TOUCH THE GROUND.

The young Londoner who owns this New York apartment doesn't live in it full-time. And yet she is always here. "The apartment looks just like her," says Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz, who designed the pied-à-terre's interior. "She's very light and fair-skinned, and she always looks almost as if she's floating on air. I wanted the apartment to reflect that delicate nature."

He began by painting the living room walls a color inspired by a scarf the client wore to their first meeting. "The scarf was transparent," Noriega-Ortiz recalls, "with a shade of light, light green that you only saw when the scarf was bunched up to gather the color; when it was flat, you barely noticed the shade."

The apartment too gets its color not from the depth of any one shade but from the use of each hue in several layers. Against living room walls of a Benjamin Moore color dubbed

Rainforest Dew and white ceilings, cream and taupe pieces in different shapes and textures make a strong statement despite the neutrality of the colors themselves. At the entrance to the living room, two chairs—one upholstered, one in painted wood—cradle cushions covered in white Mongolian lamb.

A king-size bed in the middle of the space is covered in cappuccino-colored wool, tufted and tasseled for a luxurious look. And on both sides of a wide-screen TV that is revealed by the parting of brushed-cotton drapes, feathered lamp shades add to the room's almost cloudlike whimsy.

"I use feathers a lot," says Noriega-Ortiz. "With the slightest breeze, they create a feeling of air and movement in a room."

PRODUCED BY LINDA O'KEEFFE. PHOTOGRAPHS BY QUENTIN BACON.
WRITTEN BY SUSAN KLEINMAN.



Lironically, the apartment that keeps its owner out of impersonal hotels was once part of a hotel itself. “The place was made by combining several of the hotel’s old rooms,” explains Marla Pasareno, a designer with Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz who served as project manager, “and the hallway to the bedrooms and study is very long and narrow, just like a hallway in a hotel. But rather than fight that length, we decided to work with it by mirroring the far end.”

To balance the hallway’s narrowness, the designers created a gracious welcome in the gallery, a small room between the living room and dining room. Although not situated right at the front door to the apartment, the gallery nevertheless serves as the formal entryway. Its walls are lined with two layers of fabric, a gold-dust sheer over a sugar-glazed white cotton. Gathered and slightly puddled at the floor, they create shadows and shimmer in the light—and help compensate for the apartment’s nondescript architecture. “With all that fabric,” says Noriega-Ortiz, “you can forget that the walls are just five inches thick.”

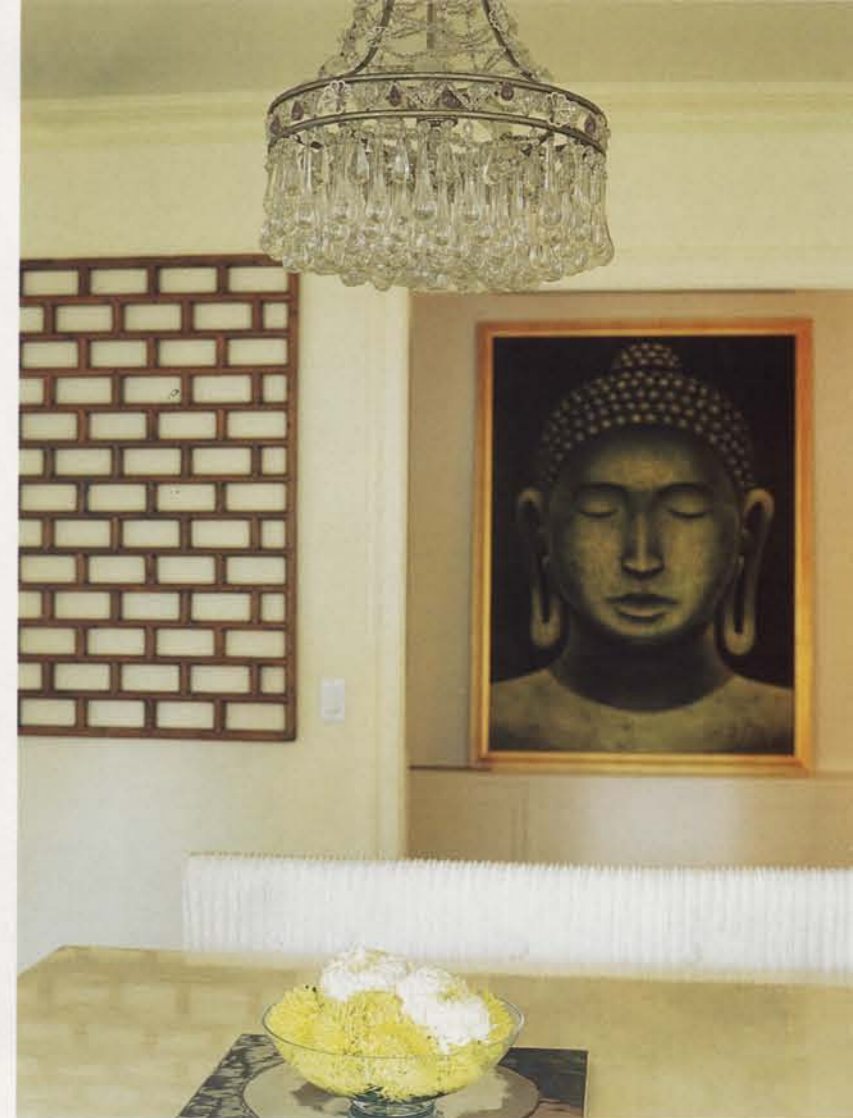
White wall-to-wall carpeting completes the cocoon. But while it suits the space perfectly, the carpet was actually not part of the original design. “The client really wanted to keep the original dark wood floors,” says Noriega-Ortiz, “so we did, even though I would have preferred something much paler. And then over the summer, the floors had some water damage, and we had to replace them and lay down carpet instead.

“Sometimes,” he says, “accidents happen. And sometimes,” he adds with a laugh, “they happen for the best.”



In the gallery (this page and opposite, top), ornate 18th-century French mirrors and a crystal-bead chandelier from the 1920s add drama to the neutral palette, and custom Lucite pieces add visual interest without dominating the small space. Opposite (below): Mongolian lamb was added to this chair’s seat to complement the cushion on a companion chair.

In the dining room, the designers reversed the living room's paint scheme, using the pale green on the ceiling and white on the walls. Rustic wood Chinese screens add contrast in tone and texture. Opposite (from left): The designers added deep texture wherever they could, as if painting with deep impasto; Buddha, who hangs in the kitchen, keeps meditative watch over diners.



To further soften the apartment's straight lines and boxy shapes, the designers chose as many feminine pieces as possible. An art nouveau vitrine de salon in the dining room adds swirls and shows off elegantly shaped vintage goblets, and the dining chairs boast exuberantly curlicued backs.

"When we found the chairs," says Pasareno, "they were in really terrible condition and we had no idea where they were from. But the client was able to envision how beautiful they would look when they were refinished in this soft, silvery gold and the seats were re-covered. While the work was being done, the upholsterer found tags that identified them as Egyptian."

The chairs are the perfect foil for straight-backed dining benches of Noriega-Ortiz's own design. "This is the most popular piece we've ever done," he says of his Darcy Bench, which he

has placed in several homes and restaurants. "People love the fact that a couple can really sit next to each other, instead of on separate chairs, that a woman can put her purse down, that you save space by having two seats with just four legs."

Square, like the room itself, the dining table has a glossy bone finish that reflects the light and helps give the room a spacious feel despite its relatively small size. The table's sheen reflects the light of the chandelier, a 19th-century French piece with crystal drops that glitter like fine jewelry—and help maximize the sunlight that streams in through the diaphanous drapes.

"I used sheer drapes throughout the apartment," says Noriega-Ortiz. "I can't bear to block the light in New York. This city can get so gray."

The elongated organic shapes of handblown vessels play against the sharp angles of the New York City skyline. Opposite: In the bedroom, the designers layered sheer white fabric over the palest icy blue. On the bed a third layer in blue flannel adds warmth and substance, and a Mongolian-lamb-covered pillow adds one billowy cloud to the bedroom's day-at-the-beach spirit.



In the master bedroom, sheer fabric covers not just the windows, but also the ceiling, the walls and the bed itself. The effect is somewhere between a formal Chinese wedding bed and an Arabian desert tent—but while the look is dream-like, it was inspired by an architectural reality. “This is the smallest space in the apartment,” says Noriega-Ortiz. “So instead of using a four-poster bed, which would have made the room look even smaller, we hung the canopies right from the ceiling, so the whole room feels like a tremendous bed. It’s very sexy, very sensual.”

The venetian glass bedside lamps are voluptuously curved, and the top layer of the bed’s tenting recalls a wedding dress. But for all the room’s femininity, the homeowner’s significant other feels perfectly at home here as well. “He loves the sea,” says his girl-

friend, “and the color in this room reminds him exactly of that.”

That’s because the color is both saturated and muted, explains Noriega-Ortiz. “I wanted you to feel like you’re in the color rather than the color being an accent. At a certain point,” he says, “the color becomes the room.”

When they’re not floating in the blue bedroom or watching movies in the living room, the couple hangs out in the comfortably elegant study, which is home not only to a collection of valuable antique globes but also to a family of plush-toy monkeys and a silly souvenir troll.

“The time comes,” says Marla Pasareno, “when the designers have to step back and let the clients make the place their own. After all, that’s what makes it feel like a home.” ❖
See Resources, last pages.

