

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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SPECIAL ISSUE: BEFORE & AFTER





COVER: Coffered ceilings and a Picasso highlight the family room of a New York penthouse, with interiors by Charles Allem. Before photography by Billy Cunningham. After photography by Peter Aaron/Esto. See page 212. ABOVE RIGHT: Pierre Yovanovitch made a Gunnar Asplund piano the focal point of his Paris apartment. See page 150.

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Window on the World

A SHERRY-NETHERLAND APARTMENT REVEALS INTIMATE VIEWS OF MANHATTAN



RENDERING BY SHOPE RENO WHARTON AND PLAN COURTESY SHOPE RENO WHARTON

BEFORE

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AFTER

OPPOSITE: Mica Ertegun, left, and project designer Mica Duffy, of MAC II, worked with architects Bernard Wharton, center, and Jerry Hupy, partners with Shope Reno Wharton, to renovate a New York City apartment for an investment banker, his wife and their two daughters. OPPOSITE BELOW AND THIS IMAGE: A cased opening separates the living room from the dining room beyond. The paintings in the living room are by Tom Wesselmann, left, and Milton Avery. Sofa, Tee Calicchio.





BEFORE



AFTER



An arched window in the living room looks down 59th Street. "Off to the side, you're seeing all these views of the city," Wharton says. "The apartment is very shiplike." For Shop Reno Wharton, remodeling projects are rare. "We're traditionally ground-up architects," says Hupy. "Ninety-nine percent of our work is new construction." *Standing Ada (Double Sided)* is by Alex Katz. Niall Smith 19th-century side table.



It is a city of skyscrapers, and most New Yorkers want to live as high as possible. Top floors are almost always the most sought after, and those who can afford to live in dollar-feathered eagles' nests brag about views that can stretch from the Bronx to the Battery. Until recently, the owner of a newly renovated apartment on Fifth Avenue counted himself in that height-obsessed majority. "I had the mind-set that the higher you are, the better you are," he says.

But that was before he discovered that low views—those from the former mezzanine level of the Sherry-Netherland, for example—can sometimes

be just as exhilarating as high ones. You may be able to see New Jersey from a penthouse, but you can't enjoy one of the greatest shows on earth, the never-ending drama of New York City street life. Of course, it helps if your windows look out on one of the New Yorkiest parts of New York, the city celebrated in the movies and the songs. "I don't know of another apartment like it," says Mica Ertegun, head of MAC II, the Manhattan firm that designed the interiors. "If you took one photograph for someone who had never been to New York, this would be the shot," says her associate Mica Duffy. "It would show everything that is so amazing about the city."

Where others saw disaster on an unfashionably low floor, the owner saw a unique opportunity.

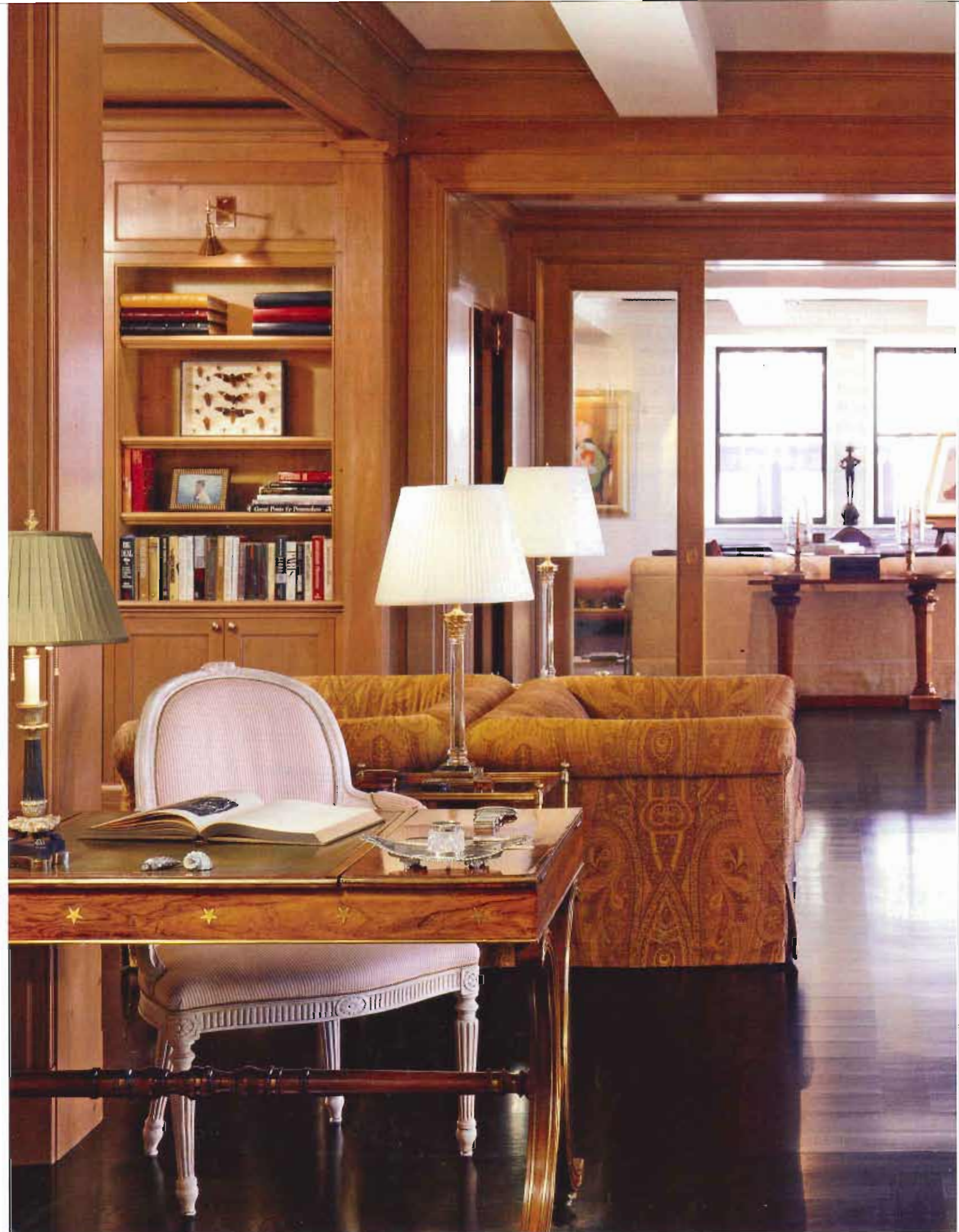
That amazing spot is the corner of Fifth Avenue and 59th Street. To the west, across the avenue, is a formal plaza, with a classically designed fountain and an Augustus Saint-Gaudens gilt-bronze statue of General William Tecumseh Sherman. Behind that postcard panorama is the elegant face of the Plaza Hotel and the southern end of Central Park. To the south, across 59th Street, is a more modern plaza,

the home to CBS's *Early Show* and the huge glass cube of one of Apple's flagship stores.

With a remarkable 100 feet along Fifth Avenue and an even more remarkable 125 feet along 59th Street, the apartment is part of the streetscape. "You're basically down on the street," says Bernard Wharton, a partner in Shope Reno Wharton, the Greenwich, Connecticut, firm that did the architectural reconstruction. "You can see



OPPOSITE: A circa 1800 Swedish chandelier defines the dining room. ABOVE: "A kitchen of that size is not ordinary," Hupy says of the 520-square-foot room. "For Manhattan spaces, it's pretty dramatic." As elsewhere in the residence, the ceiling beams help create a sense of scale and rhythm. Circa 1950 Lucite-and-chrome counter stools, Lobel Modern.





BEFORE



In the pine-paneled library, the ebonized floors, which are used throughout the residence, reflect the light from the living room windows. "We felt the apartment should be open and loftlike," explains Duffy. For privacy, each of the major spaces can be closed off with pocket doors.

AFTER



ABOVE: Paintings by Katz, Wayne Thiebaud and Tom Wesselmann, left to right, hang in the master bedroom. The chaise longue is covered in carpet Ertegun brought back from Morocco. BELOW: Plans show the openness of the new configuration. OPPOSITE: In the guest room, Duffy chose an Indian fabric with an elephant motif for the four-poster; “just for fun.”

the people who walk by, but since people don't look up, they can't see you.”

Such a strategically placed people-watching perch occupies the entire floor, 10,000 square feet that once housed such things as a beauty shop and air-conditioning equip-

ment. “It was a wreck, a bomb site,” is how Duffy describes what she saw when she first stepped off the elevator. “Nobody had given a damn about it for 40 or 50 years.”

Where others saw disaster on an unfashionably low floor, the owner, an investment

banker, saw a unique opportunity. “He took the dog on the block and showed what it could be,” says Jerry Hupy, another partner in Shope Reno Wharton. “My wife and I have never bought anything that was an obvious jewel,” the owner says. “It has always been some-

thing funky, something that required vision.”

Sharing that vision were Hupy and Duffy, who had worked most closely on other houses for the couple, including their previous home in suburban Rye (see *Architectural Digest*, February 1999). “We’ve become a team—the clients, the architects and the designers,” says Duffy. “On this project we all had our opinions, and we fought for them. That way, you gather all the best ideas everybody has. There were no big egos. We just wanted to create something that the space deserves, something super.”

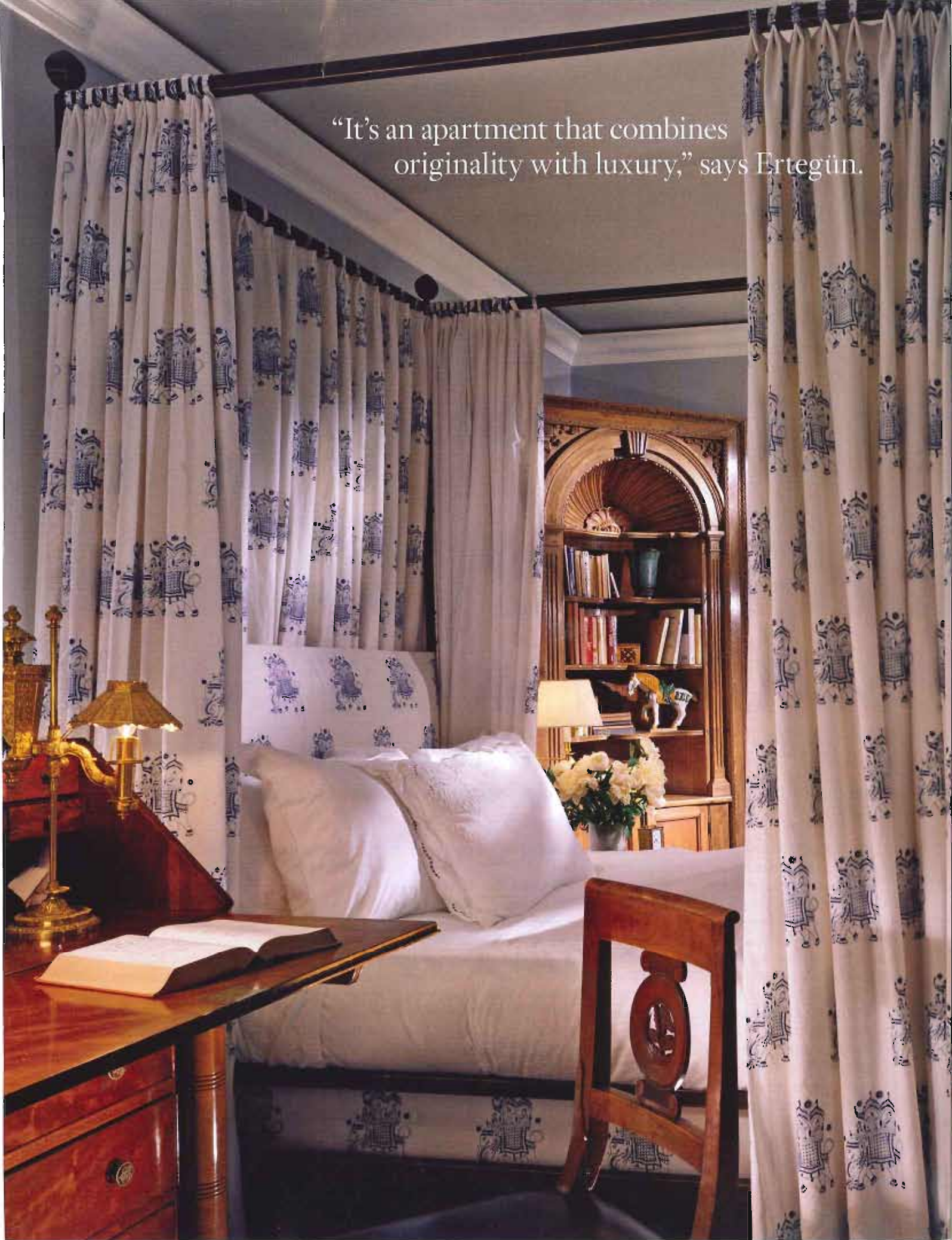
On one thing everyone agreed. The space should remain open, as if it were a loft in SoHo or Tribeca rather than an apartment in the tradition-bound Sherry-Netherland. “The challenge was to keep the floor plan open so that we had visual axes to the outdoors,” says Wharton. “There’s a power in the space,” adds Hupy.

Power indeed, and few apartments have such long, unbroken vistas. Without moving an inch, someone standing in the corner of the living room can see almost the entire residence. Looking north, the eye tiptoes through the pine-paneled library, then races into the master bedroom to stop at the striking Alex Katz red portrait

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“It’s an apartment that combines originality with luxury,” says Ertegin.



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on the far wall. To the east is an even longer perspective, through the dining room, the kitchen and to the end of the hallway that leads to the other bedrooms—the owners have two daughters. Though they are rarely used, pocket doors can be pulled out to provide privacy by separating one room from another. A second phase of renovation will be completed this spring, adding a media room, a wine room and a golf simulator.

“It’s an apartment that combines originality with luxury,” says Ertegun, and to find that rare combination, MAC II’s design roams through several centuries and two or three continents. The din-

“My wife and I have never bought anything that was an obvious jewel. It has always been something that required vision.”

ing table, for instance, is Italian, from the 20th century. The chairs around it are English, from the early 19th century. And the delicate crystal chandelier above was made in Sweden at the turn of the 19th century. “The design is eclectic to a tee,” says Duffy. “There’s no real color scheme. I like warmth—earth tones—and I use a lot of different colors. But they all work together.”

The owners’ extensive collection of Modern art—from Roy Lichtenstein and Tom Wesselmann to Alex Katz and Milton Avery—brings in even more colors. “My wife and I are very much focused on color and on the relationship of colors,” says the husband. “We like things that are representational and not abstract. There’s a similarity in every painting we have. They’re all very strong, with big blocks of color.”

Duffy carefully placed the furniture so that wherever you are, you’re looking outside. Windows so close to the ground provide what the husband calls “a painterly perspective,” with most views framed by trees or the flags waving from Fifth Avenue buildings. “I feel,” he says, “that we’re at the heart of the heart of New York City.” □

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got his toys”), and when he isn’t on board, they use it as their private dining room. There’s an aft lounge, with separate bath, which can be used as a private office—and is, when he’s along for the ride, by Wright, who happily proclaims, “I like to spread out in the rear”; a main lounge, which sports a banquette, leather seats, and sofas, a couple of which convert to full-size beds; and a forward lounge, complete with galley and bath, for the crew (“They’re fully self-contained,” says the owner).

All of the above-mentioned furniture is, needless to say, new, the trappings that came with the plane having struck the owner as too corporate in feeling to retain. It was the Los Angeles-based Wright who then suggested redoing the interior in the spirit of a luxury ocean liner in the spacious days of transatlantic travel. One of the objects he went on to acquire even graced the 1930s Moderne-style wonderliner *Normandie*: Jean Dunand’s maquette for the grand relief in the boat’s smoking room, purchased at auction in Paris. “The theme on that relief is horses, and I was looking for something for the main lounge of the plane that had some reference to the owner’s life.” (He is, it should be noted, an internationally rated polo player. “I keep two strings of ponies in California, and I’ve got one string in France, and I play polo in Argentina but I don’t have my own string there,” he volunteers. “And

swirly pattern safely inspired by one on the *Normandie*.”

In further deference to that lavishly outfitted ship, which was the last word in luxe for its day, all the crystal on the plane, champagne flutes included, is Lalique. Even the ceiling fixture is modeled after a Lalique design; cast in resin out of considerations of safety and weight, it nonetheless succeeds in giving the illusion of crystal. A series of lamps in a classic Lalique pattern also had to be executed in resin. “We went through the tortures of hell to get it right,” the designer says. “For every one that we were able to use, there were four or five that just didn’t look real enough.”

Customarily, as soon as the plane reaches cruising altitude, the cabin attendants “haul out an authentic Lalique sturgeon, a sculpture of a fish—and the Buccellati grape leaves—and set up a caviar buffet on the sideboard, with very good bottles of wine and champagne. And, I might add, he’s very generous with the caviar. And if there’s any left over they bring it right to me to finish it off—and, oddly, there usually is.”

“We do travel well—we have five-star service,” the owner concedes. “There’s a gourmet kitchen. I like to make omelettes in the morning. I make steaks. We pop popcorn at 41,000 feet.” Even the table linens Wright had a hand in. “We sent them

The owner confesses, “I’m just having fun. It’s a toy, you know. It’s a Roman candle—you light it up and it goes off.”

my son’s been in Pee Wee Polo since he was four.”) Wright further recommended a palette of saddle tones, and designer and owner together came up with the idea for the special Hermès-stitching detail on the leather seating.

Mohair, a material at once soft and durable, was selected for the banquette and the bulkheads, but for the latter it was gauffered in an Art Déco pattern so as not to show wear. Wright’s original carpet design was vetoed by the wife. “It was maybe a little too Napoleon III for her—you know, I get a little pretentious now and again, and I think she wanted it a tad more understandable perhaps for her friends,” he reflects. He repaired to the drawing board and returned with a

out to be laundered once, in some remote place like Nepal, and they boiled them,” he recalls with a shudder. “When they came back, they were still beautiful, just much, much smaller—one of the cloths had shrunk eight inches. So then I had to have enough additional ones made so they would never have to be laundered in, shall we say, rustic conditions. So then that led to another problem—to have enough storage space for the extra linens.”

For a designer who flies private as often as not, there remains an even more pressing problem: Whenever he’s reduced to flying commercial, Wright confesses, “I just sit there trying to pretend it’s not even happening. I just can’t get used to it—I’m totally ruined for life!” □