

HIGH CONTRAST

WITH A PROFUSION OF GLAMOROUS DETAILS AND CONTEMPORARY ACCENTS, AN UPPER EAST SIDE TOWNHOUSE IS INFUSED WITH A DOWNTOWN VERVE.



The family's toy poodle, Ted, greets visitors in the entry hall of a townhouse on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Settee in a Great Plains linen, Niemann Weeks; rug and stair runner made from antique rug fragments, Aubry Angelo; photograph, Massimo Listri.

INTERIOR DESIGN BY ALECIA STEVENS | ARCHITECTURE BY McBRIDE ARCHITECTS
LANDSCAPE DESIGN BY HILARY FINN GARDENS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY BJÖRN WALLANDER
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Sheathed in silver leaf and finished in golden Venetian wax, the living room's ceiling shimmers at night. Custom sofa in a Bergamo Fabrics damask; armchair in a Donghia velvet; black side table, Liaigre; mirror, Dennis & Leen; 19th-century Italian chandelier, Alexandra; curtains in a Pierre Frey silk satin; bunny artworks, Hunt Slonem. OPPOSITE: In the study, the custom sofa is in a de Le Cuona wool paisley; desk, Gregorius Pineo; 19th-century pendant, David Duncan; antique Federal mantel, William H Jackson Company.



IT'S SAID THAT, IN THE END, you regret the things you didn't do, not the ones you did do. By that logic, a certain couple deserves to feel quite contented. Their newly renovated Manhattan townhouse is the result of "saying yes to everything," as the wife puts it.

"Everything" in this case includes not just decorative elements, like a gold-hued Venetian-wax ceiling in the living room with lined and interlined silk curtains, but also major structural changes, such as steel casement-window walls on each floor that open onto a series of stepped terraces that cascade down the house's backside. It all happened thanks to a fruitful collaboration between the interior designer Alecia Stevens and architect Nate McBride, who together conjured up a home that is at once luxurious, exhilarating, and utterly comfortable.

The mixture of ease and elegance is apparent the moment you step inside the front door. Large black-and-white marble tiles have tumbled edges, lending a worn, softened look to the classic checkerboard pattern, and the extra-wide staircase is carpeted in a hand-patched antique runner. A touch of drama comes from an oversize Massimo Listri photograph, which seems to beckon the viewer into a looking-glass palace. Troweled plaster walls draw the

eye up to the parlor floor, while the stone underfoot grounds the space, leading through the kitchen to the family room and garden beyond. "You come in, shut the door, and it's like, *ahh*, it's so nice in here," says the client.

She first discovered Stevens while searching online for a designer in Minnesota, where her family lived while her sons were in high school. Once the boys were off to college, she and her husband were ready to graduate to a more grown-up abode. The interior designer was more than happy to oblige. "'Pretty and proper' was her directive to me," recalls the decorator, adding that "pretty" for this client did not mean frilly or girlish, but rather a judicious use of what Stevens refers to as "yummy" details. She hung a chandelier bedecked in crystal flowers in a room carpeted in jute matting, placed silk-velvet chairs on a shaggy wool-mohair rug, and introduced a gold canopy bed into the serene master bedroom. "I like rooms that are carefully edited," says Stevens, who underscored this sense of restraint with a color palette based on black-and-white and luminous grays, warmed up with subtle touches of bronze, gold, and mossy green.

While these hues help to unify the rooms, the architect and



The kitchen ceiling was opened to expose the original floor joists above. Range, La Cornue; wine refrigerator, Sub-Zero; pendant, Rose Uniacke; stool, Mark Albrecht Studio; backsplash and floor tiles, Exquisite Surfaces. OPPOSITE: The table in the dining room is by Michael Taylor; vintage Mies van der Rohe chairs, Gerald Bland; 18th-century Italian mirror, David Duncan; vintage chandelier, Remains Lighting; wallpaper, Gracie.



ABOVE: A feeling of calm pervades the master bedroom, where a gold Louis XVI-style canopy bed from Niermann Weeks injects a touch of luxe; vintage stools, David Duncan; garden stool, Zachary Ltd.; lamps, Vaughan; ceiling light, Niermann Weeks. **BELOW:** The family room opens directly onto the garden. Custom sofa in a de Le Cuona linen; custom bobbin chair in a Robert Kime fabric; cocktail table and dining chairs, Démiurge; Gustavian chest, Alexandra; custom hide rug, Kyle Bunting. **OPPOSITE:** In the garden designed by Hilary Finn, a floor in white pebbles adds a sense of luminousness that is echoed by pinholes in backlit steel panels, which glow like a starry sky at night; antique faux-bois bench, Alexandra. For more details, see Sourcebook.



designer also worked to give each one a distinct character—to offer what McBride describes as a “diversity of experiences within the home.” One space hints at an English manor, another a French country kitchen, and there’s a Zen garden out back. Likewise, spaces designed for privacy or contemplative work sit alongside rooms made to welcome family and friends.

Even after gaining an additional 1,258 square feet from the stepped-out back, the townhouse isn’t huge—a fact McBride capitalized on by using massive pocket doors between some rooms to bring in light as well as views from both facades. “Every room can offer glimpses out the front and back,” says McBride.

Because the original structure was gutted at the outset, Stevens and McBride reintroduced a sense of history via elements like wood paneling, plaster moldings, and antique mantels. But the house is hardly stuck in the past. If anything, it evokes a sense of movement and flow—from the ground floor up the sweeping staircase to the glass penthouse (which McBride added to the roof), or from the polished, classical front to the wide-open back and garden beyond. In all, it stands as a testament to the joyful velocity of saying yes. □

