

DESIGN FOR THE WELL-LIVED LIFE

# HOUSE & GARDEN

OCTOBER 2005

*all about*

## *Floors*

Trends in carpet, wood, tile, stone, leather



MAGIC CARPETS: THE STARKS AT HOME

MODERN IS AN IDEAL UNION



## WOW! WHEN HOME IS A 12-ROOM

penthouse duplex that includes a suburbanlike expanse of terrace and unobstructed 360-degree New York City views, "Wow!" pretty much sums it up.

That's exactly how Andrea and John Stark reacted when they first saw the space two and a half years ago during an epic house search. When the hunt began, they were living in the fabled Waldorf Towers. John missed having a duplex like the Park Avenue one they'd occupied for more than 20 years, and Andrea yearned for the airy sensation of their Palm Beach residence, yet they kept looking at traditional, often dark, pre-World War II apartments.

Then their broker called, urging them to see something "entirely different"—a post-World War II, white-brick building with a soaring, two-story rooftop aerie so vast it included a greenhouse. Andrea recalls walking in and saying, "This is it!"

She turned to interior designer Jeffrey Bilhuber, whose embrace of both the traditional and the modern impressed her. He, in turn, found her wish list telling. "She wanted something with a modern sensibility but didn't want to turn her back on the past," he says.

Comfortable as a team, they faced the new apartment's challenge: how to create a sense of intimacy, of family, in a huge space defined by showstopping views. Their references included



distinct seating areas. One has a gilded settee with contrasting panels of brown and ivory fabric that evokes Pauline de Rothschild. "She was channeling a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century solution based on function," Bilhuber says of the darker color on the arms. Two chairs he designed complete the grouping around a pair of custom-made faux tortoiseshell tables. Another seating area is dominated by a low-slung sofa that so closely resembles one in a circa 1962 Cecil Beaton portrait of the baroness that it almost places her in the room. Two chaises designed by Bilhuber sit under shells that Dorothy Draper designed for Hampshire House, a Manhattan landmark.

The dining room also evokes the greats. A late-eighteenth-century French table of plum pudding mahogany contrasts with a twentieth-century lacquered sideboard. Bilhuber mounted the low 1950s piece on a two-inch-thick Lucite platform with Chinese-style legs. A Julian Schnabel work, a painted-over photograph of Versailles, hangs above. The room dances in light, from the Swarovski crystal chandelier by Tord Boontje to a pair of polished brass mid-century sconces that send pinpoints of light up to the ceiling and down to the floor. Even the silk damask curtains add light; embroidered by hand in Bilhuber's workroom, they have mother-of-pearl and crystal beads that create an array of constellations.

## THE FLOOR PLAN

- The Meliot carpet's tight weave, Bilhuber says, "is a perfect foil for the palace-scaled pattern" of the dining room wall covering, opposite page.
- The carpet's linear quality is matched by that of Kenneth Noland's artworks, from the Pace Wildenstein gallery, NYC. The simple pattern of the rug contrasts well with the Swarovski crystal chandelier.
- The breakfast room, this page, has Klismos chairs from Galere and a Platner table by Knoll.