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TOP FLOOR

WRITTEN BY VALERIE CRUICE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT FRANCES

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, AT NEW YORK'S FAMED PLAZA HOTEL, THE HIGHER-UPS COVETED STATEROOMS LOWER DOWN, BECAUSE, IN THOSE DAYS, ELEVATORS COULD NOT ALWAYS BE DEPENDED UPON. Ironically, last year, a couple planning to move into their newly renovated Plaza residence on the third floor were told the elevators were being serviced that day. Without missing a beat, the wife ordered a crane, and she and her husband were installed in their new apartment through windows overlooking Central Park South.

After nearly 40 years in Los Angeles, interspersed with time spent at another home in Florida, the duo decided to retire to New York. Avid art collectors, they acquired a former stateroom, with its enormous proportions and 13-foot-high ceilings, from the Plaza developer's floor plans, and then, during a three-year wait while the building was being renovated from the top down, the newly minted New Yorkers turned to friend and interior designer Jeffrey Hitchcock, of Jeffrey Hitchcock Enterprises in Los Angeles. The three have enjoyed a professional and personal relationship spanning 25 years, with Hitchcock decorating the couple's offices, previous residence and even their children's homes.

Los Angeles architect Ward Jewell, of Ward Jewell & Associates, says of the homeowners, "They are great collectors, so one of our challenges was to display the art by giving each space character in a sort of *moderne* way. I think of it as a French *pied-à-terre* of the '30s." In a year's time, the unit was gutted, and all five bathrooms were redone. The powder room was so complicated with its angled mirrors, including an inverted ziggurat on the ceiling, that Jewell had to make a maquette for the contractor, John Rusk, and his master carpenters, who relished the challenge.

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|---|--------------------|--------------------------|
| INTERIOR DESIGN Jeffrey Hitchcock, Jeffrey Hitchcock Enterprises, Inc. | | |
| ARCHITECTURE Ward Jewell, Ward Jewell & Associates | | |
| HOME BUILDER John Rusk, Rusk Renovations Inc. | | |
| BEDROOMS 3 | BATHROOMS 5 | SQUARE FEET 3,600 |



STYLE SELECTION
A Fernand Léger mosaic rivets the eye in the foyer of an apartment in The Plaza Residences.



STILL LIFE
Hyperrealist Claudio Bravo's *Pale Surprises* hangs over a sofa and leather side chairs from Caché. Gilt chairs are the owners' Swedish Art Deco, covered in Dedar fabric. The bronze figure is by Wendy Fisher. A Tang Dynasty horse sits atop a William Switzer coffee table.



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"Not many people are working at this level," said Rusk, of Rusk Renovations, who has completed seven renovations in The Plaza. Of the boiserie, special cabinetry, woodwork, stainless steel inlay, granite floor, exotic stone, woods, finishes and carving, he says, "Everything had to be perfect."

Interior designer Jeffrey Hitchcock attributes the success of this project—and projects past—to trust. "The more the clients trust, the more they are going to get a great job," he says. The wife concurs: "It's like one brain working; we really read one another." When they decided on the Deco color scheme of cream and black, she says, "He was off and running."

Hitchcock referenced the vibe of the legendary Plaza. "The building brought to mind an era of elegance, of the 1940s, something in its heyday, of the Black and White Ball, the glamour and allure of The Plaza," he says. Hitchcock imparted a restrained opulence, which sets off the art collection

BLACK OUT

A Louise Nevelson wood sculpture, *Mirror - Shadow XXXVI*, dominates the den. Walls are upholstered in suede. The black and white painting is by David Smith. A Tom Otterness bronze sculpture graces the macassar ebony desk.

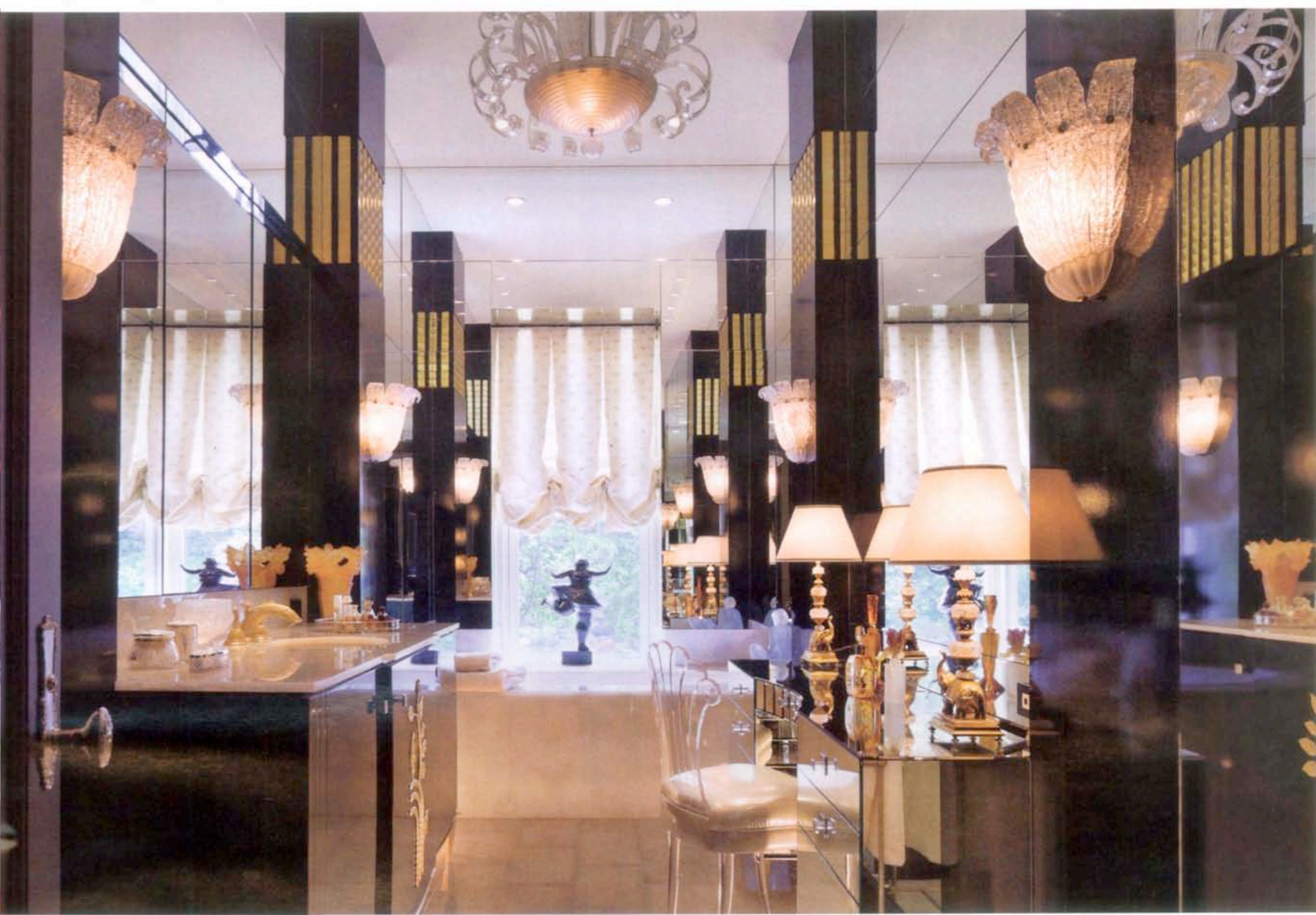


MUSEUM QUALITY

Fernando Botero's *Girl With a Flower* presides over the living room. Pablo Picasso's *Figure au Corsage Raye* and Georges Rouault's *Vieux Faubourg* hang above 18th-century Spanish Regency commodes; a Henry Moore bronze reclines atop one. Alexander Calder's *Spiral Face* gazes upon a Manolo Valdés alabaster piece. Botero's *The Dancer* fills a corner; in the foreground sits *The Cat*. At left, bronze group of figures, *La Foule*, by Jean Lambert-Rucki.



RED HOT
 A Chinese red-lacquered boiserie frames mercury glass. A neoclassical Russian chandelier from D&D Antiques Gallery glimmers above a mirrored table by Jean de Merry. Black lacquered chairs from J. Robert Scott upholstered in black patent leather from Keleen Leathers. A pair of François-Xavier Lalanne bronze monkeys with a gold patina rests in the corners. Hand-painted curtain fabric from Cloth & Paper.



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and defers to the spectacular view skimming the treetops of Central Park South. Sophisticated French and American Deco furniture and accessories reinforce that sensibility. Fabrics in silk satin, silk velvets and charmeuse bring a soft, glamorous sheen. Color-blocking, as executed in the window treatments and carpet borders in perfect proportion, anchors the clean-lined look.

The owners' art collection ranges from a Tang Dynasty horse and a Louise Nevelson sculpture to present-day artists such as Nicholas Africano, concentrating primarily on mid-century to contemporary paintings and sculpture. "The collection is based on what I like. It's always something that spoke to us. We seem to follow wherever our heart or eye lands," says the wife.

The foyer, says Hitchcock, "sets a flavor when you walk in." A trio of females—one a "startling" hand-carved wood figure of a girl; the second, a vivid mosaic; and third, a black Deco marble bust—intently greets visitors. The wall finish is Venetian plaster with "very little blading; it has the

ALL MADE UP

The epitome of glamour, her bath: snow-white onyx, black-lacquer custom cabinetry, mirrored vanity. Sconces are 1940s Italy Barovier from Bernd Goeckler Antiques. Ceiling fixture is 1930s Venetian from Guy Pegal. Scalloped Lucite vanity chair from Caché in fabric from Nobilis. A Botero bronze sculpture, *Ballerina*, dances in the window overlooking Central Park South.

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luster of a pearl and creates a clean but warm background," Hitchcock says. The floor is black granite in a large diagonal pattern, emphasized by stainless steel insets, which, with the stone, also creates a border around its perimeter. Carrying the creamy walls into the living room, Hitchcock originally envisioned a chandelier in the recessed ceiling at its center. "She fought me on it," he recalls. "All of a sudden, she and I had the idea to try *Cerf-Volant [The Kite]*, by Jean Dubuffet, hanging from the ceiling. We thought it was perfect."

He got his chandelier—a delicate antique Russian—in what was the original breakfast room, now an intimate dining room. In a departure from the subdued palette of the living room and foyer, the wife wanted Chinese red. Jewell and Hitchcock designed the French paneling with mercury glass. A seamlessly concealed door leads to the kitchen, which makes the color-drenched, brilliantly reflective experience all-enveloping. "It's so French: You have a very small room with a very high ceiling," notes Hitchcock.

The height of glamour, however, is her master bath. "It was inspired by Alberto Pinto," says the designer. "The floor is snow-white onyx, the cabinets are black lacquer to the left of the sink, and opposite is a mirrored vanity, all in a French Deco manner." The original shower was removed, and the tub placed at the window. "It's just so chic and makes you feel beautiful," says the wife. "The view from my bath frames the lake of Central Park." **L**



MASTER CLASS
Walls upholstered in cream silk texture from Zoffany. American Deco style mirrors from John Rosselli Antiques, above 1940s mirrored nightstands from John Salibello Antiques. Chair in foreground is French Art Deco Bergere circa 1925 from Bernd Goeckler, with Beacon Hill fabric. Sleigh bed by Quatrain, upholstered in black leather from Ashbury Hides. Tai Ping rug in Chrysanthemum pattern. In corner, Africano's ethereal bust in limestone and glass. A *Flower in the Absence of Irony* in window, terra cotta female figure by Hanneke Beaumont.