



GENTLEMAN FIRST This page: The exuberant curves of an Italian Revival fireplace and tracery ceiling are offset by a Harvey Probbler game table and chairs and a vintage chrome and glass coffee table. Right: A custom sofa in Indian steel frames a 1960s Danish armchair and a portrait from 2012 by Francesco Merletti.



MUTUAL RESPECT

IN A PARK AVENUE DUPLEX, WHITE WEBB MARRIES ITALIAN REVIVAL ARCHITECTURE WITH 20TH-CENTURY DESIGN AND 21ST-CENTURY ART

INTERIOR DESIGN **WHITE WEBB, LLC** • TEXT **KAREN LEHRMAN BLOCH** • PHOTOGRAPHY **ART GRAY**

BLENDING THE OLD AND THE NEW IS ON TREND RIGHT NOW, WITH increasingly interesting pairings and juxtapositions. Partners since 2004, Matthew White, a staunch classicist, and Frank Webb, a proud modernist, are themselves an interesting combination, turning a mutual respect into fusions that are both fresh and timeless. A Park Avenue duplex in a Stanford White-designed building presented a dramatic showcase for their symbiotic partnership.

The client was an American businessman who loved the historic aspect of the Italian Revival-style building (a single family mansion that had

been divided into co-op apartments in the late 1970s) but also wanted to make it suitable for modern life and the showcasing of his contemporary art collection, which includes pieces by Ed Ruscha and Allan McCollum. First goal: historic preservation. "The living room's unusual stone fireplace and tracery ceiling are original architectural details, which we were determined to restore to their turn-of-the-century glory," says White.

Next: improved flow and function. In the layout they inherited, half of the living room floor was open, and on the lower level a dining table had literally been built around a support column. They **CONTINUED >**



SWANK & SIZZLE *Opposite page, clockwise from top left:* A 2009 lithograph by Ed Ruscha holds court in the living room; the silver drum of an Artemide light fixture reflects the delicate tracery ceiling; artifacts and books from the owner's collection; *Collection of 15 Drawings*, 1988/1991, by Allan McCollum grace the top of the custom spiral staircase. *Below:* A 1960s Italian bar cabinet is enriched by Edward Wormley stools and a Kartell lamp.





SUBTLE SENSUALITY *This page:* A Japanese soaking tub pops against dark slate tiles in the master bath. *Opposite page, right:* A George Nelson Platform Bench, *Untitled* (from Harmony Sisters Series) 2005 by Esko Männikkö, and a Tony Duquette "California Sunburst" chandelier help to create a more subdued spirit in the master bedroom.



restored the living room floor and reconfigured the space so that all public rooms, including a study/guest room, were on the upper level. The support column was embedded within a new wall, which now divides the master bedroom from the dressing room on the bottom floor.

For the furnishings, says Webb, they drew upon the rich tradition of a "swank gentleman's club." The living room walls were papered in a deep gray-blue grass cloth to offset the artwork and make the pale fireplace and tracery ceiling pop. A deep blue custom sofa recedes into the walls, expanding the perception of space and creating a cozy place to

read or sip a martini. The master bedroom, inspired by the iconic "gray flannel suit," is dressed in varying shades of soft gray.

With such special architecture, says White, "we let it take the lead and then layered in elements that provided either an interesting contrast or complement to it. The variety and blending remove it from being a period room and transport it into the here and now."

The end result? 100-year-old architecture is enhanced by equally spirited contemporary art, and a modern sensibility is grounded in a classical foundation, begetting, as Webb puts it, "a celebration of life." SEE RESOURCES 4