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PERFECTLY PARK AVENUE



Vicente Wolf's work is a study of opposites and, in this generous East Side apartment, old and new, East and West flawlessly converge

TEXT: LISA VINCENTI PHOTOGRAPHY: NATHAN KIRKMAN



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New York City, perhaps like no other metropolis in the US, represents the best—and the worst—of America. Take for instance the story of fabled Park Avenue. This bastion of reserved and respectable high-rise living, a mere century and a half ago, served as nothing more than an undesirable swath of railroad track running from Manhattan to Harlem. But by the 1950s, thanks to some marketing maverick (and the burying of the rail lines leading to Grand Central Station), the broad boulevard, originally named Fourth Avenue, hosted some of the city's most sought after uptown addresses. Today, a Park Avenue location is an emblem of having arrived, of power and wealth. Long forgotten are the days of locomotives sending plumes of smoke through the air.

So it goes in New York; old makes way for the new again and again.

But there is another side to this place, old and new can, and do, peacefully coexist. While a young couple may have bought a roomy duplex in a 1910 Park Avenue apartment house from an elderly lady, who hadn't spruced up the three bedroom in an eternity, they certainly wanted to modernize without erasing its historic character. They placed their fate in the skilled hands of interior designer Vicente Wolf. Wolf is a wizard at fashioning synergy from contradictions, deftly tucking yin into yang. And the plan he executed for the pair marries tradition with contemporary, crude with polished, and antique with new.

"My spaces are about the thinking process, about travel through time and cultures, and through the mixing of scale, texture and points of view," says Wolf,

























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skirted armchairs and a Swedish Rococo chair. A quick look to the other end, past a series of coarse African ladders that resemble fine wood sculptures in this setting, dispels any notions that the living room is all buttoned up conservative. There, a custom cowhide rug, a set of Metropolitan Chairs by B&B Italia, accompanied by a curved sofa and round leather ottoman, with saddle stitch detail, add the contemporary streak and energy to take the edge off.

For Wolf, this blend of traditional and contemporary is not enough. He also likes to drop in touches of ethnic flavor, such as the African steps in the living room. In the master bedroom, a 19th century mother-of-pearl inlaid table stands before an 18th century French end table, upon which sits a 19th century blown-glass lamp and a series of chunky silver bracelets that Wolf had mounted in Thailand. Though all the elements are antique and from different eras and regions, they effortlessly merge as a whole, looking completely modern in the context of this sophisticated setting.

"In a way, it wasn't an easy project because there were boundaries in how far you could go in one direction or the other... you were always walking a thin line," notes Wolf. "It was wonderful doing this because it is so elegant. I took an apartment that was an old lady and made her look contemporary. At the moment, I'm into making things from another time look right today... Nothing is worse than looking at something old. But if you deal with it in a contemporary way, it comes to life" ■ *Vicente Wolf Associates, 333 West 39th Street, 10th Floor, New York, NY 212.465.0590*

