



# interiors

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*P* OETRY IN DESIGN

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**"YOU HAVE TO LET CLIENTS FIND THEIR LIKES AND DISLIKES,"** explains Vicente Wolf. "Part of the process is to guide them and give them a sense of why things are being done a certain way." Listening to the prolific designer describe his conceptual approach to each project is just the beginning. The more time one spends in a Wolf interior, the more one appreciates its balanced, refined nature. "I blend and create an environment, both minimal and restrained, often using ethnic elements that soften the space, giving it a sense of humanity and comfort."

After looking through piles of shelter magazines and decorating books, a couple in New York's Westchester County chose the multifaceted Wolf to create the right look for their new home. "I couldn't imagine raising three boys in the city," says

the owner of the New York property, which sits on several acres. "We wanted to keep the original French Tudor-style building we bought here, but its foundation wouldn't support the extension we needed." The couple sought Connecticut architect Jason Chai of CS Architecture to design an entirely new family home that still honored the original aesthetic. For the interior, the pair turned to Wolf—which proved to be an inspired decision. The designer is famous for his sophisticated, modern sensibilities, and during his thirty-five-year career in the business, he has brought his enthusiasm for world travel, collecting and photography into the design mix.

Arriving at a gravel forecourt, where minimalist landscaping by James Doyle acts as a smart background for the house, one is

greeted in the foyer by carefully placed artifacts on a custom bi-level table. Immediately, it is easy to see Wolf's sure hand. "I try to make most things meet at a center point," explains the designer. "When things line up, it gives a space a sense of tranquility."

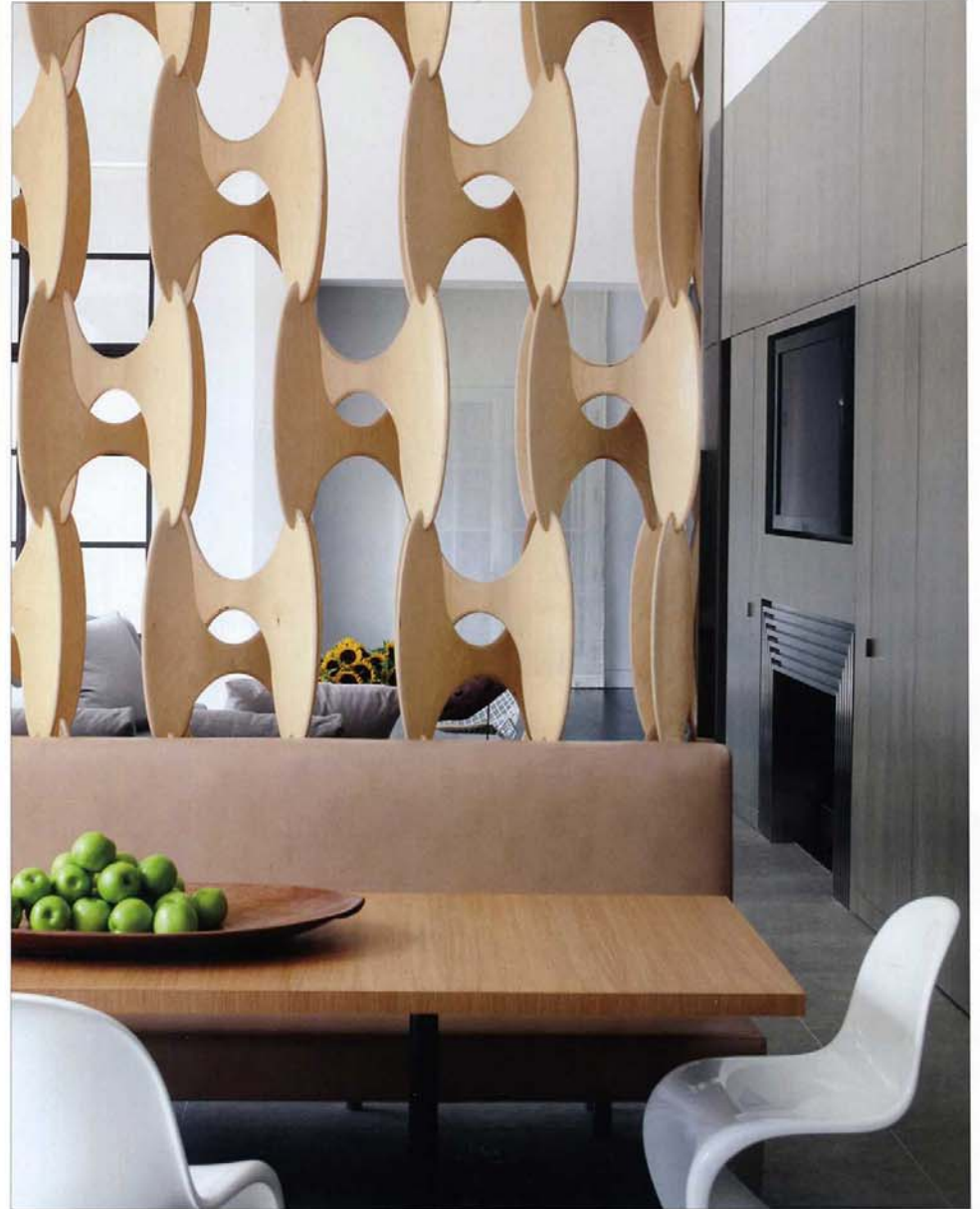
For the gracious, light-filled dining room, where the couple often entertains, Wolf designed a large silver-leafed back-lit panel as an architectural feature. While the custom piece is a striking element, the space retains a subdued elegance, thanks in part to the sleek dining room furniture from Wolf's VW Home showroom. "My detailing looks very simple," he says. "The subtlety of it escapes you until you really see it."

In the dramatic family room, "the high ceilings were inspired by the living room of the previous building we demolished," explains



the wife. "I had the artist Miro in mind when I wanted something mid-century modern-like to divide the space into two," adds Wolf, "and we found designers Egawa + Zbryk in Kansas City, Missouri, who created a screen to give the living area a sense of intimacy while at the same time allowing a visual connection to the kitchen." Curvy Vernon Pantor dining chairs echo the screen's contoured shapes, and a modern stove is seamlessly integrated into the dark gray kitchen counter. For the floors, Wolf wanted to "give the sense of stone that flows from the outside to the inside."

In the stair hallway, Wolf placed a sculptural pair of wooden ladders from the Dogon tribe in Africa in the curve of the winding main staircase. The infusion of natural material in this dramatic contemporary space, where light plays within the volume and





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against glossy floors, illustrates Wolf's mastery of composition. Similarly, the opposite side of the hall was transformed into a luxe seating area.

Wolf's skill with color and depth is revealed through textures and tones of rich brown hues in the sitting room, which also doubles as a screening room. This part of the home was originally designed as two areas separated by a pair of pocket doors. Instead, Wolf explains, "I wanted a softer space, so we replaced the doors with a bookcase with a frosted back. I like a mix of yin and yang, so I softened the walls by upholstering them, which also gave them detail." Warren Platner chairs with metal frames

provide a contemporary edge, while the warm brown sofas and chairs, given a punch with bright orange cushions, add drama to the carefully considered space. "Like poetry, there has to be a connection between one sentence and the next," Wolf notes.

Upstairs, Wolf repurposed the landing as a living room and library, which leads into a calm, peaceful gray bedroom. Heavy blinds and a padded wall behind the bed give it a cozy, cocoon-like feel. Here, and throughout the house, Wolf has added many subtle references to Africa and Asia, countries he knows intimately through his many travels. "I like places where most tourists don't go, like Nepal and Mali," he says. "Maybe I don't



see the danger there, as for me it's just about the pleasures of the discoveries." Perhaps this is why Wolf has such a clear vision of his design work. "When you look at my rooms, there are a lot of disparate elements. How do you take a space and give it depth? If a space is all one thing it gets very monotonous—I always try to give it a timeless quality." ■ Vicente Wolf, Vicente Wolf Associates 212 465 0590 vicentewolf.com

