

# PRECISION CRAFTED

AN UPPER EAST SIDE TOWNHOUSE GETS A THOROUGHLY MODERN MAKEOVER THAT'S ALL ABOUT THE DETAILS

INTERIOR DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE INSON DUBOIS WOOD  
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**FACE TIME ABOVE:** The neoclassical edifice exudes Upper East Side demeanor. **RIGHT:** Inside, it's a thoroughly modern affair. The main-floor Arelinea kitchen has high-tech Glassos surfaces from Stone Source, a David Weeks chandelier, and Moura Starr's Turkana chairs through Brazil-based Biasi Catani's New York showroom. A display shelf mixes African Dogon sculpture with a contemporary Lladró porcelain figure.



**KISS AND DWELL** THIS PAGE: Contemporary art complements a dining room that features an Orley Shabahang rug, Philippe Starck "Passion" chairs for Cassina, and a Lindsey Adelman chandelier. **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Behind the living room's Promemoria sofas and Holly Hunt coffee table hangs a Justin Bower painting; on the opposite wall is a French gray limestone fireplace enveloped by bleached, clear-lacquered Macassar ebony paneling; the library's ecrused wenge walls, similarly bleached and lacquered, set off a Promemoria sofa with pillows mixing silk velvet and Hermès leather. Underfoot, another Orley Shabahang carpet; sconces by Alison Berger.



**THOUGH SOMETIMES** getting a bad rap for their narrow proportions, townhouses are one of New York's most elegant housing options, the very word conjuring a bygone brand of sophistication. Arguing that dollar-for-dollar a townhouse was a better buy for his clients—a young couple with adolescent twin daughters—architect Inson Dubois Wood convinced them to turn their gaze away from glamorous high-rise penthouses and come back to terra firma. In short order they found a handsome 1920 specimen on a particularly attractive stretch of East 75th Street and proceeded to gut it.

Of course, Wood couldn't physically widen the building. But he could, he says, "create a space that's fun to actually live in and has the lifestyle qualities of a loft," making it at least feel more amply endowed from side to side than it was. His first step was to run a cantilevered open steel staircase with French white oak treads from basement to roof, where a new glass-box teahouse lets in natural light and sends it spilling down the entire stairwell.

"We loved the idea of Hitchcock's *Rear Window*," Wood also recalls, explaining his decision to replace the rear façade with glass, unwrapping it to the courtyard garden and welcoming in still more natural light. To mitigate overexposure, however, "We have four layers of window treatments—two rollers, a sheer and curtains—so you can decide what level of privacy you want." **CONTINUED ▶**



**SECRET GARDEN** THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE  
 FROM LEFT: A Henry Hall "Flow" collection table and chairs in the redesigned back garden; the family room, with access to that garden, gathers a Flexform sectional, Holly Hunt rug, and drapes of J. Robert Scott fabric; a powder room vanity repeats the modern theme.  
**OPPOSITE:** Architect Inson Dubois Wood replaced the entire back façade with glass.



**INNER SANCTUARY** The custom master bed, which sits between a Carini Lang rug and a Ted Abramczyk chandelier from Ralph Pucci, boasts a Clarence House horsehair headboard and a J. Robert Scott faux leather frame. **BELOW:** Custom Corian wainscoting and vanities in the master bath. **OPPOSITE:** From the Agape tub in the master bath, modern Carrara marble walls and Corian wainscoting provide a foil for a perfectly framed view of a Baroque-style church across the street.



Enhancing the already airy feel, and also the owner's art collection, the same Donald Kaufman shade of white used in Gagosian galleries across the world covers most walls. "It has 26 pigments of white in it," says Wood. "You really can feel that." On selected surfaces, he brought in wood, but treated it innovatively. "It was a very intentioned idea to bleach the Macassar ebony in the living room and the wenge in the library," he notes. The many-step process (both took multiple coats of high-gloss lacquer; the wenge was also cerused) imparted a luminosity not usually associated with these varieties, helping amplify light.

"They are perfectionists," observes the designer of his clients. "So even though the whole thing reads as a unified composition, you can look extremely closely and see that high level of detail. Everything is laser-perfect." To wit: those wood treatments, with some 20-plus different types of reveals, and recessed C-channels at the bottoms of walls to make them appear to float.

Finally, Wood layered the interiors with custom rugs from Orley Shabahang and Carini Lang; lighting from Alison Berger, Lindsey Adelman and David Weeks; case and upholstered pieces from Promemoria; drapes from Romo, Donghia, and J. Robert Scott; and accent fabrics from Fortuny, Clarence House, and Christopher Hyland. The cumulative effect is one of bright modern spaces softened with luxurious layers of comfort. And most happily, notes Wood, "It's an 18½-foot wide townhouse, but everyone who comes in there thinks it's a 25-footer." **SEE RESOURCES ■**

