

INTERIOR DESIGN

SEPTEMBER
2008

focus: new york





out with the old

A formal parlor with crown moldings and plaster filigree is exactly what most people expect from an 1860's brick town house on a tree-lined Greenwich Village street. Metallic walls are not. But a pearlescent parlor perfectly embodies what this house has become: a traditional residence untethered from its musty heritage. The five-story, 3,800-square-foot project is the first where Murphy Burnham & Buttrick Architects principals Jeffrey Murphy and Mary Burnham carried a contemporary aesthetic all the way through a historic shell, and they went at it with gusto. ➤

Clockwise from top: Chairs by Charles and Ray Eames surround a custom resin-topped table in the kitchen; the photograph is by Sharon Core. In the parlor, a Serge Mouille chandelier hangs above an Isamu Noguchi table, chairs upholstered in linen velvet, and a Todd Hase sofa. The house dates to the 1860's.

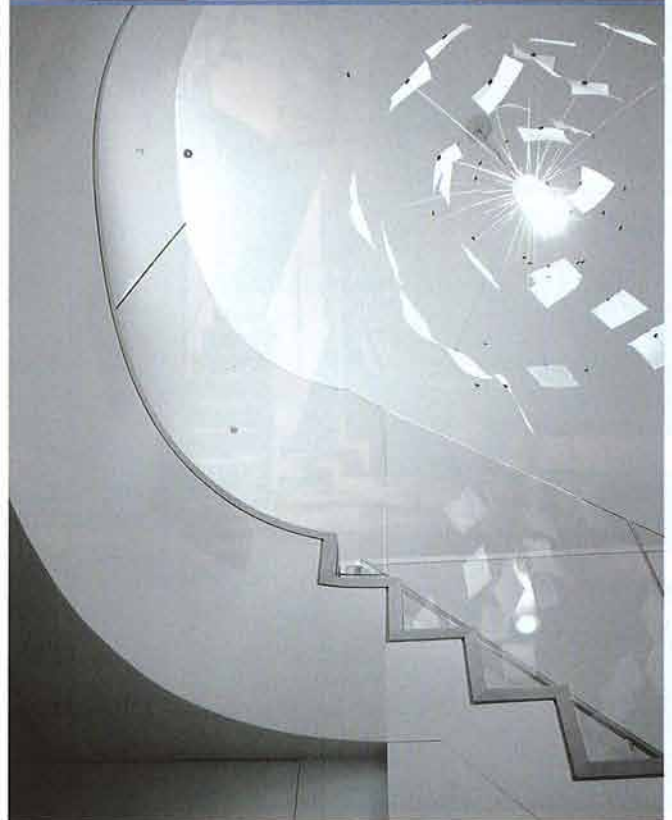




Clockwise from top: The Calacatta marble kitchen island accommodates Spin and Tomoko Azumi's stools. An Eero Saarinen table, chairs by George Yabu and Glenn Pushelberg, and a sofa covered in cotton-polyester furnish the sitting area, sandwiched between the kitchen and parlor. Meals in the playroom, which opens to the barbecue area, take place in Arne Jacobsen chairs.



From top: In the sycamore-paneled media room, Jacobsen's chair and footrest sit on a custom cowhide rug, beneath a David Weeks chandelier. Ingo Maurer's chandelier lights the stair to the top-floor study.



Murphy and Burnham were brought in to renovate the kitchen. Doing that, they had to confront two of the classic challenges of a town house. Where should the kitchen be placed, on the garden or parlor level? And how could natural light be brought in from the front and back? The architects resolved both problems by placing the kitchen at the rear of the parlor floor. "A downstairs kitchen would have been a dead end," Burnham explains. "On the parlor level, a kitchen becomes central. You pass by to go everywhere in the house."

The kitchen terminates at a dramatic steel-framed window wall, allowing for a deluge of sunshine and views of the leafy backyard. It's as if you'd sheered off the entire back of the house. A pale palette amplifies the natural light and the feeling of spaciousness—so much so that, despite the house's typically narrow width, the architects were able to install deep storage along one sidewall. Opposite, stainless-steel appliances are built into glossy pale gray lacquered cabinetry. "Since the kitchen is a backdrop for the living spaces, we treated the cabinets like walls instead of millwork," Murphy explains. The center of the mahogany floor is occupied by a Calacatta marble island and a table for eight. Its opalescent resin top looks almost identical to the glass pavers of the balcony right outside the window.

Kitchen renovations have a habit of turning into whole-house transformations, and that's exactly what happened here. On all five stories, awkwardness gave way to airiness. Furnishings are largely modern, from the Eero Saarinen table in the diminutive sitting area between the kitchen and the parlor to the latter's Isamu Noguchi cocktail table and Serge Mouille chandelier. Materials and finishes are restrained yet warm, particularly on the three upper levels, where flooring is blond maple. Slubbed linen covers the walls in the children's rooms; their shared bathroom has wall panels of milky back-painted glass. In the sycamore-lined double-height media room, which hosts movie nights and poker games, ➤



Clockwise from top: A custom white-maple bed-desk and linen wall covering outfit both children's bedrooms. Their shared bathroom features honed Thassos marble floor slabs and a back-painted glass wall. Bluestone paves the backyard.

an avocado-green mohair-upholstered Egg chair by Arne Jacobsen sits in a corner, flanked by a flat-screen TV and a full bar. When paneling slides across to conceal them, and an Antonio Citterio sofa becomes a bed, the room morphs into guest quarters.

From the landing outside the media room, a new staircase with a clear glass balustrade spirals up to the study. "So it gets lighter as we go higher," Murphy says. Not that the garden level is dark. As in the kitchen, the rear wall here is glass. Beyond it is a barbecue area and the blue-stone-paved backyard. "Adults are cooking or reading. Kids are hanging out," Murphy says. "You can get lost in some town houses, but here the action is centralized." Indeed, the only hints of old New York are the redbrick neighbors peeking over the trees. —Sophie Donelson

FROM FRONT HERMAN MILLER: CHAIRS (KITCHEN). TODD HASE: SOFA (PARLOR). ROGERS & GOFFIGON: SOFA, CHAIR FABRIC. POLLACK: WINDOW SHADE FABRIC. TUFENKIAN CARPETS: CUSTOM RUG. THROUGH GUÉRIDON: CHANDELIER. THROUGH WYETH: MIRROR. LA PALMA: STOOLS (KITCHEN). TECH LIGHTING: PENDANT FIXTURES. DACOR: COOKTOP, OVEN. CHILEWICH: CUSTOM RUNNER. HOPE'S WINDOWS: CUSTOM WINDOWS (KITCHEN, PLAYROOM). DORNBRACHT: POT FILLER (KITCHEN), SINK FITTINGS, TOWEL BAR (BATHROOM). KNOLL: TABLE (SITTING AREA). ROOM: SOFA. GRETCHEN BELLINGER: SOFA FABRIC. NIENKÄMPER: CHAIRS. UNIKA VAEV: CHAIR FABRIC. PATTERSON, FLYNN & MARTIN: CUSTOM RUG. FRITZ HANSEN: TABLE, CHAIRS (PLAYROOM), CHAIR, FOOTREST (MEDIA ROOM). KRAVET: CHAIR FABRIC, FOOTREST FABRIC (MEDIA ROOM). HOLLY HUNT: SOFA FABRIC. B&B ITALIA: SOFA, OTTOMAN. EDELMAN LEATHER: CUSTOM RUG. RALPH PUCCI INTERNATIONAL: CUSTOM CHANDELIER. INGO MAURER: CHANDELIER (STAIRWELL). BLU DOT: CABINETS (BEDROOM). ROOM & BOARD: TABLE, CHAIRS. URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY: RUG. BERGAMO FABRICS: WINDOW CURTAIN FABRIC. GROUNDWORKS: WALL COVERING. KOHLER CO.: TUB, TOILET (BATHROOM). HASTINGS TILE & BATH: SINK. THROUGH BED BATH & BEYOND: RUGS. MODERN OUTDOOR: TABLES, CHAIRS (EXTERIOR).
THROUGHOUT MELANIE FREUNDLICH LIGHTING DESIGN: LIGHTING CONSULTANT. ROBIN KEY LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE: LANDSCAPING CONSULTANT. DUNNE & MARK'S CONSULTING STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS: STRUCTURAL ENGINEER. LANDMARK FACILITIES GROUP: MEP. ADAMS INTERIORS, CATSKILL WOODWORKING: WOODWORK. LICO CONTRACTING: GENERAL CONTRACTOR.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: PETER AARONFESTO (2); KEVIN CHU/KCJIP

walk through