



WARMING TREND

Greenwich-based designer Deborah Lipner turned this once strictly traditional Fifth Avenue duplex into a sumptuous setting for family entertaining

BY CAROLYN MURNICK

AFTER WORKING WITH HER clients—an investment banking couple with three school-age daughters—on their summer house in Tuxedo Park, designer Deborah Lipner had a clear understanding of their domestic priorities. “They’re a warm family with sophisticated tastes,”

says Lipner, “but they want to really *live* in their houses.” So after a few years inhabiting their newly-purchased Upper East Side duplex, the family knew that there was ample room to make the place even more livable.

Thus began a year-long gut renova-

tion—and family relocation—in which every wall was knocked down and the floor-plan entirely reconfigured, with the end goal being a four-bedroom home restored to pristine estate condition. Lipner

The enlarged foyer and grand, circular stairway.



Lipner chose oversized brown velvet sofas and a graphic Aubusson-patterned rug to add a more intimate scale to the spacious living room.

worked in conjunction with New York-based architect John Murray, who devised a program that preserved the traditional architectural elements of the space, while enlarging the main rooms and updating the layout by eliminating extraneous features like staff rooms.

For the grand foyer, Lipner and Murray transformed the once blocky passage into a welcoming, vaulted space, featuring a curved stairway with a trellis effect. "In the original layout, it felt like you were going through a tunnel to the second floor," says Murray. "We instead rearranged the structure to create an open connection between the duplex floors." Lipner chose

hand-rubbed mahogany for the banisters—which match the front door—and bold, hand-painted oak paneling for the floor. "With such high ceilings, we decided to oversize our design, to create a more intimate scale within the space," she says. As a dramatic accent piece, Lipner chose a wrought iron and glass suspended light fixture to anchor the stairwell opening. "We wanted something bold, but see-through, so as not to take away from the beauty of the railings," she says.

During the planning process, the south-facing living room became the focal point of the design program. "The light in that room during the day is amazing, so

we worked to try to bring that same light into the other rooms," says Lipner. "We ended up starting [to design] with that room, and working our way outward." For the grand space—the largest in the house—which includes a piano that all three girls make use of, Lipner chose a rich color palette of browns, persimmons, and poppies, which she subtly reflected in the surrounding rooms to create a continuity between the spaces. After sourcing the perfect vendor for the custom-made, oversized brown velvet sofas, Lipner scoured Chelsea antique shops for some of the more eclectic accent pieces of the room, like the Biedermeier chair and the



To add a casual touch to the otherwise ornate dining room, Lipner chose textured tweed upholstery for the chairs, and a dusty pink paint color for the ceiling.

bronze mirror frames. "I love to mix textures like bronze and velvet, formal and casual," she says. The wool rug was also custom-made, as Lipner opted to take a traditional Aubusson pattern and blow it up to match the grand scale of the furniture. For the window treatment, Lipner chose oversized drapes made of heavy, patterned silk. "The family loves to make fires and lounge in this room, so we made

sure to keep it child-friendly with dark-colored, textured fabrics." To offset the rich tones, Lipner chose a light grey paint color for the ceiling.

Seen through the doorway off of the living room, the library represented a key collaboration between designer and architect. As the room was intended to house the family's book collection and primary television, both Lipner and Mur-

ray agreed on high-quality knotty pine fixtures to evoke a suitably casual feel. Rather than match the foyer's rich mahogany finishes, the pair designed the mouldings, wall panels, and shelving with the softer, golden wood in mind, which, says Lipner, "allowed us to carry the golden color of the upper floors into the downstairs."

As the couple are avid cooks and wine-lovers, the dining room was particularly



Working off of the clients' own bed and charcoal grey chair, Lipner created a neutral but cozy master suite with antique accent pieces like a bronze urn lamp.

important to them. Lipner found a round table that could seat ten to anchor the room, and then chose an antique Chinese console table to act as a sideboard. "They love to have family and friends over, so this room needed to be as warm and as comfortable as possible," she says. To that end, Lipner opted for tweed-covered chairs to add a casual element to the otherwise ornate space. On the walls, Lipner sourced a unique wallpaper made from multiple layers of burnished, folded tis-

sue paper, and she painted the ceiling a pale, dusty pink to reflect the red of the walls and floor. Overhead, Lipner found the oversized crystal chandelier at designer's mecca Holly Hunt, as well as the wall sconce, a vintage Romanian piece.

In the master bedroom, Lipner used the couple's own bed and chair as a jumping off point for her design program. With taupe carpeting and a pale blue ceiling, Lipner chose Chinese toile wallpaper as the focal point of the room. Beside the

bed, the designer paired a modern Donghia end table with an antique urn lamp.

In the end, both architect and designer agree that after their clients' year away from home, they wanted them to return to a place that truly reflected the way their family lived, and perhaps even how a family might have lived back when their building was constructed in the 1920s. "Ultimately," says Murray, "we just wanted the apartment to feel timeless—like it had always been that way." ♦