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# THE WORLD OF INTERIORS



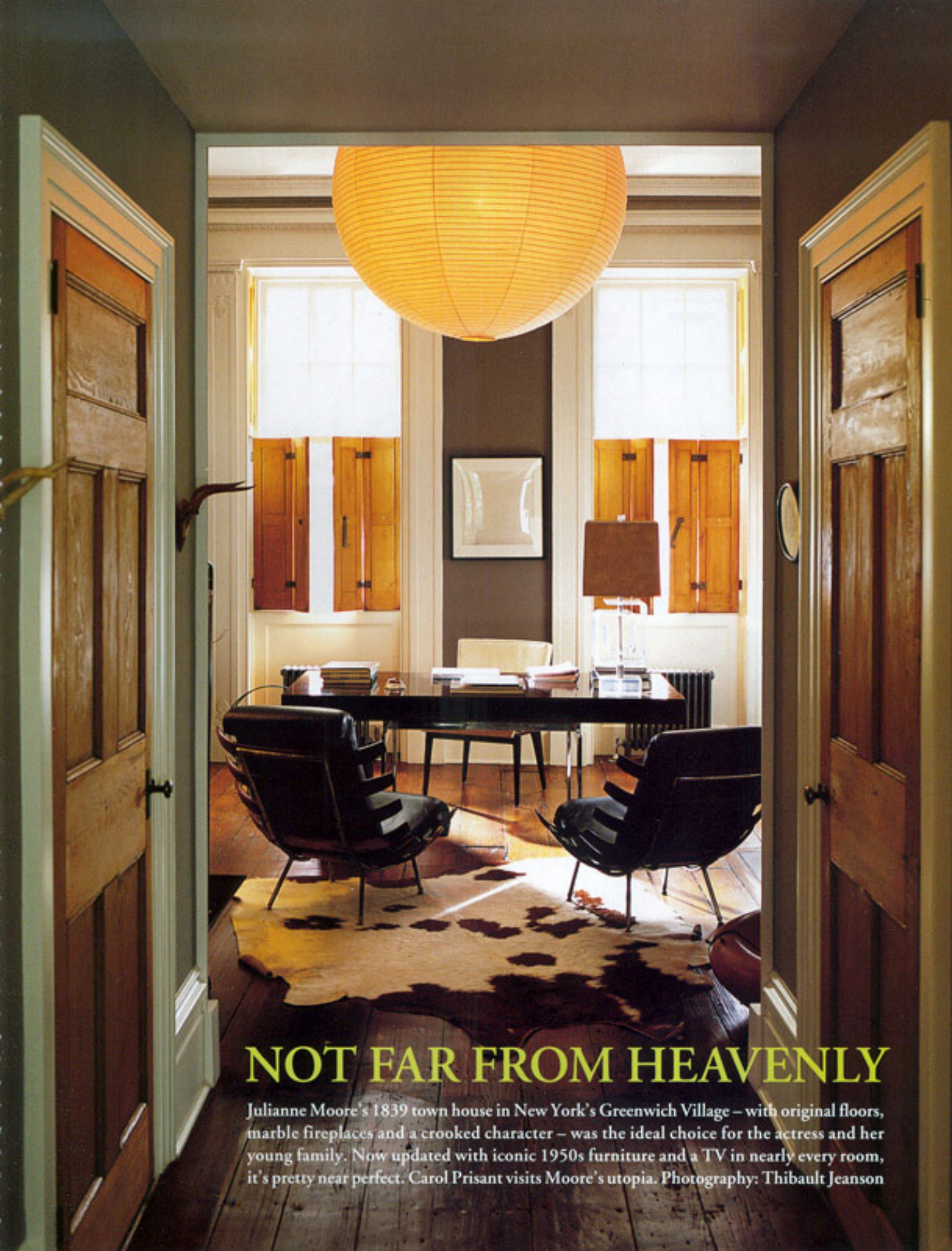
Julianne Moore's Utopia:  
Movie Star's 1830s Town House

**SLICE HOUSE: Cutting-Edge Architecture in Brazil**





*Above: a maple tree house sculptured by Roderick Romero is the highlight of the all-green garden. Left: visitors to the tree house can enjoy a view of some 'very old, very small houses' and the neighbour's willow. Opposite: the office is furnished with a lamp by Isamu Noguchi, a ponyskin rug and two French chairs given by Julianne's best friend, actress Ellen Barkin*



## NOT FAR FROM HEAVENLY

Julianne Moore's 1839 town house in New York's Greenwich Village – with original floors, marble fireplaces and a crooked character – was the ideal choice for the actress and her young family. Now updated with iconic 1950s furniture and a TV in nearly every room, it's pretty near perfect. Carol Prisant visits Moore's utopia. Photography: Thibault Jeanson



*Julianne, a lover of irregular shapes, has a coffee table by George Nakashima as the focal point of her living room, with an Eames rocking chair close by. The turtle shells were found in shops in the Village*





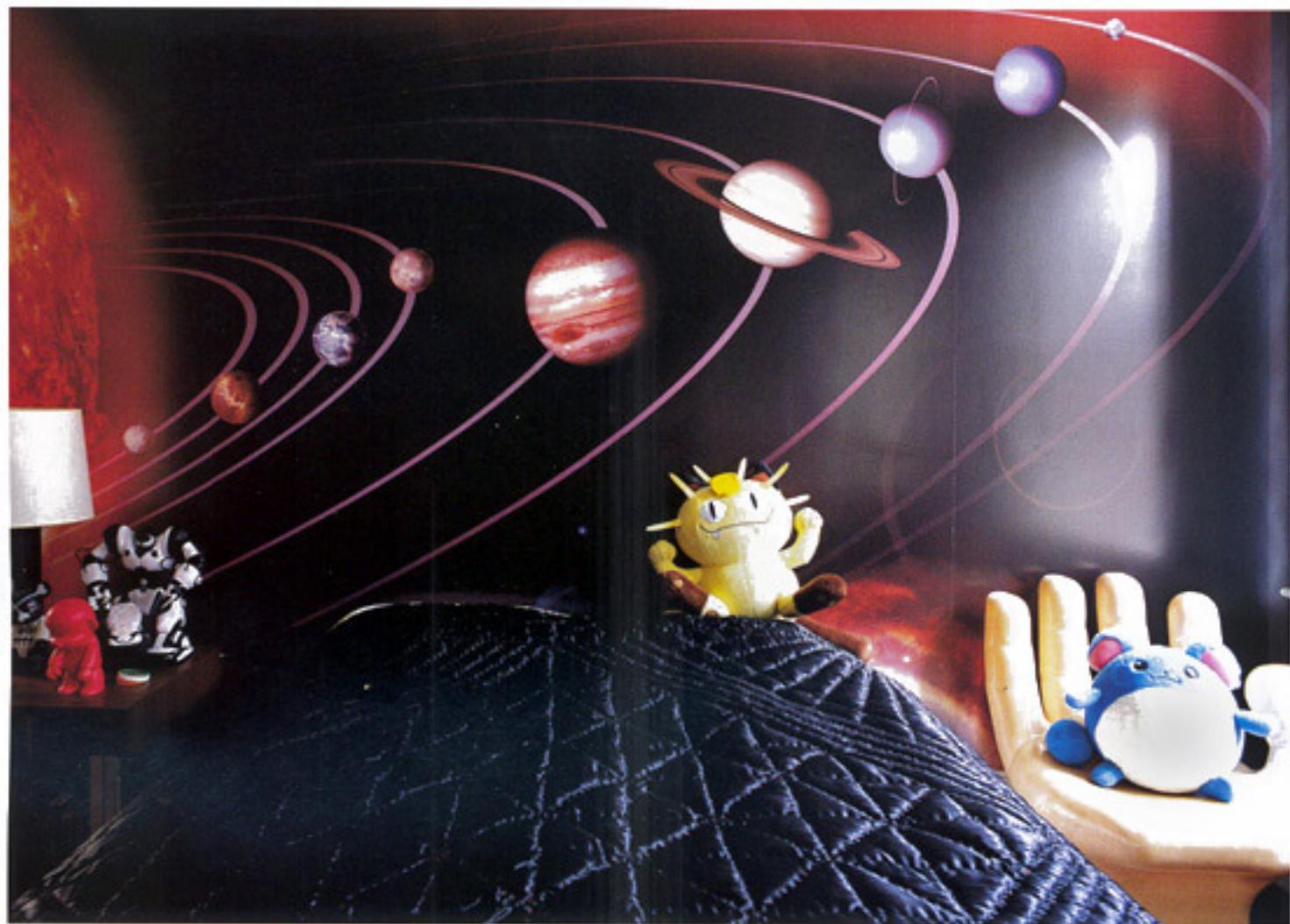
*Left: varnished gnarled driftwood and a 1950s chair mark a route over the floorboards to the back door. Above and opposite: 'In New York you wind up with these itty-bitty bathrooms, but we can all fit in here,' says Julianne of her bathroom, a former front parlour. The marble for the bath and sink was chosen to match the fireplace of 1839*



*Several walls had to be knocked through – 'the biggest violation of the house' – to achieve this garden-level kitchen, which retains many of its 1839 elements. Provenç stools are tucked under a Carrara-marble worktop, which matches the fittings in the bathroom*







**'FOR 20 YEARS** I dreamed about owning a town house in the far West Village, and any time one came on the market, I went to look. But the only house I ever really loved – before this one – belonged to Anne Bancroft and Mel Brooks. And that came up for sale at a time when I couldn't afford it.'

In her marshmallowy, expressive voice, Julianne Moore delivers the surprising and comforting news that major movie stars can't always afford everything they want. But unlike us, they have kissed Ralph Fiennes and dined with Hannibal Lecter.

Here, in her West Village brownstone, with a funky knit cap hiding that splendid, coppery hair, freckles exposed, and the TV blaring, Julianne patiently deals with three-year-old Liv. Over her daughter's running commentary on the *Dora the Explorer* DVD, Julianne tells the tale of how she bought her fantasy house, and what it was like to work with her brother-in-law, the architect.

'I went to see this house a week before Christmas, when my parents were visiting. Bart [Freundlich, her husband] and I had been living in a loft where the furniture was beautiful – everything was just the way I wanted it. But somehow I kept finding myself hunched over the kitchen counter on a Prouvé stool, nursing one baby, feeding another and looking round for a place we could all gather. There was just too much space. I wanted rooms. So we weren't in it a

month before we looked at each other and said, "We don't want to live in a loft." It was awful. I felt so guilty.

'I was disappointed when I got here, though, because it really didn't look like anything from the street. But I called my mom and asked her if she could watch the kids a half-hour longer, and when I walked in the door, I literally thought, This is it. This is my house. Then I brought Bart to see it. And he hated it. Until I reminded him that this was only the second house I'd ever loved. So he agreed that we could put in a bid.'

Oliver Freundlich, young, handsome and, along with partner Ben Bischoff, a principal of the architecture firm Made, interjects gently in defence of the building. 'So many of these houses have been renovated to death, but this one still had the 1839 front room/back room configuration, its original floors, shutters and the casings round the doors. We could work with that.

'We were so lucky someone hadn't rehabbed the soul out of it,' adds Julianne, 'because this house has a lot of personality. It's completely crooked. It's even sunk a couple of inches on one side – none of the contractors who were here could believe we didn't want to correct that.'

But before demolition began in earnest, the family had other plans. 'We had our wedding in the garden here,' says Julianne. 'Oliver and Ben knocked down some walls onto the parlour floor and built us a long wooden dinner

*Pokémon Meowth and Marill guard the bedroom of eight-year-old Cal. The wallpaper was reproduced from a Nasa illustration*



table. Our kids were there and it was a nice way to start our life in the house.'

That life couldn't begin immediately, though. 'After the wedding, it was construction for a year and a half. We moved to a rented town house, which turned out to be a great education. We learned where to put the closet space and found out that we'd need a really big laundry room off the kitchen and another, smaller one on the kids' floor. And that a playroom is better next to their bedrooms than on the basement level.' Each such epiphany left Oliver and Ben wrestling with the how-tos of squeezing it all into five storeys and 420sq m.

Nevertheless, when I ask, rather disingenuously, what it's like to renovate with relatives, nobody blinks.

'You know, it's been good,' she beams. 'I don't know if I'm the easiest person in the world to work with, but on the other hand, I think I'd feel intimidated working with someone I didn't know. A lot of times architects will come in and say, "I'm the expert and this is how your house should work." But these guys, well, they know I have a very strong sense of what I want. And better yet,' she laughs, actually sounding surprised, 'they're willing to listen to me. They know they have to spray the hinges, for instance, because I don't like things really shiny. But maybe the best thing about these guys is that they'll take responsibility for everything, whether or not it's their fault.'

I know that Julianne saves her *World of Interiors* back issues – so how about the decorating part? 'It's always been my fantasy to have 20th-century stuff in an old house, so while we were renting, I gave a lot of thought to the furniture and my palette. It's very inexpensive. One lamp I got free from a movie, and a lot of it is given to me because people know I like it. But I do like neutrals and things that have a lot of texture, so that's probably why I have those turtle shells. Although I feel kind of terrible about that. There was a little kid here one day who looked at them and asked where the turtles went. Oh my god,' she says, eyes widening, 'I don't want to know about that.'

But she knows lots about TV. 'Bart,' she says with a wifely sigh, 'likes sports. It's because of his influence that there's a TV in every room – even the bathroom. Because you have to be able to turn on the game. We don't have a TV in our bedroom, though, which is a major accomplishment.' She thinks for a moment. 'You know, my life is pretty much ruled by sports TV and *Dora the Explorer*.'

Every now and then, though, she wins a round.

'I was trying to find a rug for Bart's office and of course nobody wants to shop with Mommy. But I got them all to come with me to the carpet store and everyone was good for about 15 minutes. I bought that rug so fast.'

So movie stars really are a lot like us. Damn ■

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*Julianne's bedroom, which looks out onto the garden from a balcony, is the only room in the house without a television*