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change
AHEAD

Autumn's rich new decorating directions



INTERIORS

In the panelled den of British expats Annabel and Jos White's New York townhouse, a Christopher Howe ottoman covered with vintage suzani fabric and a plaid rug by Vivienne Westwood for The Rug Company add colour and texture. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** designed by architect Basil Walter, wooden panelling in the entrance hall hides a secret bathroom and coat cupboard. **Details, last pages.**

new york storeys

IN MANHATTAN'S WEST VILLAGE, A SIX-STOREY TOWNHOUSE HAS BEEN GUTTED AND REIMAGINED FOR FAMILY LIFE.

PHOTOGRAPHER NGOC MINH NGO, WRITER LUCIE YOUNG

INTERIORS



In the first-floor sitting room, **ABOVE** and **OPPOSITE**, The Rug Company's 'Mamounia Sky' rug complements the Christopher Howe sofas and ottoman used as coffee table, covered with Pierre Frey fabric. A late-19th-century mirror from Rose Uniacke hangs above a marble mantel from Chesney's (above), while, on the other side of the room, a tapestry from The Rug Company hangs above a French mirrored cabinet from Lorfor's Antiques (opposite). **RIGHT**: the open-plan kitchen and dining area opens out to the back garden terrace on the lower-ground floor.

We drove the neighbours mad," says Jos White, talking about the three-year renovation of the family's townhouse on one of the most desirable streets in Manhattan's West Village. The Whites' neighbours, Anna Scott Carter and Graydon Carter, editor of *Vanity Fair*, who live a couple of doors away, were among those who experienced the worst of it. The most embarrassing moment, recalls Jos, was when the street had to be closed to crane in hardware for his rooftop office. "I heard one of the other neighbours mutter, 'Who are these people?'"

Jos is a successful British technology entrepreneur. He and his wife Annabel, the former director of The Rug Company in New York, moved to Manhattan in 2001. After Jos sold his technology company Message Labs for US\$695 million in 2008, the couple bought their dream home in the West Village and hired the Carters' architect, Basil Walter, to do the renovation. The resulting home is an enchanting mix of grand and practical; open plan and intimate; English and American; bright colours and relaxed neutrals.

From the small entrance hall, guests step straight into an opulent 12-metre-long living area with Christopher Howe sofas, huge tapestries by contemporary artists Kara Walker and Julie Verhoeven, and a wall of modern windows opening on to a terrace overlooking the garden.

Most evenings, the Whites relax in the den. "I get so excited to sit here and watch television, flick through a magazine or be on the computer," says Annabel. This cosy room is lined with 17th-century wood panels bought in L'Isle sur la Sorgue, Provence. "It didn't all fit quite right, so there are a couple of faked pieces," says interior designer Poonam Khanna who, together with Annabel and her British interior-designer friend Sarah Russell, was responsible for the decorative choices.

The den overlooks the tree-lined street and can be opened up to flow into the main space for parties. But most nights, the doors are closed so the couple can have some adult time away from their three young children Sammy, nearly two, Ophelia, three, and Fred, five. "Annabel and Jos wanted a house that felt youthful, which had a lot of open community spaces," explains Walter, founder and principal of BW Architects. >



INTERIORS



LEFT: a bold green leather-clad banquette tucked into a nook in the kitchen creates an informal eating area for the three young children, while at the other end of the room, **OPPOSITE:** Rose Uniacke's 'Drapers' table provides a place for bigger family dinners. Lit from above by Remains Lighting 'Oskar 15' pendants, the soapstone island and marble butcher's block are by BW Architects.

THE LOWER-GROUND FLOOR IS THE HEART OF THE HOME; A HUGE

... FAMILY ROOM DEVOTED TO EATING, PLAYING AND LOUNGING

INTERIORS



The main bedroom, has a neutral palette accented. **ABOVE**, by a 19th-century trunk from Hilary Batstone reupholstered with a candy pink fabric. An antique pale-blue Swedish armchair adds interest in the corner of the room. **RIGHT**, beside the fireplace with mirror from Lorforde Antiques. **OPPOSITE PAGE**: an alpaca rug from The Rug Company is placed on the floor below a Hilary Batstone disco ball in the main bathroom. **Details, last pages.**



< To achieve this, he pulled the house apart, stripping it back to its exterior walls and then painstakingly reassembling everything with subtle differences. Being a landmarked building, the 1840s façade had to look identical to the others on the street, but elsewhere there was room for improvement. Floors were put back at slightly different heights and, at the back of the house, two new terraces were added, along with large modern windows with sash bars. Inside, Walter removed the old zigzag staircase and created a sculptural oval stair that acts as a light well, channelling light down from the rooftop home office.

The resulting house has the charm of the original, but is essentially a modern six-storey layer cake. Perched on top of the original roof is Jos's 11.6-square-metre home office. "We've set a precedent," says Jos. "It is something none of our neighbours have done yet." Because of the building's landmark status, no additions can show from the street, not even a single brick. So Jos's office is set back four metres from the parapet. On the garden side, it has an angled wall of glass windows, which cantilever up using a hand crank.

Annabel says: "I like my wardrobe black, but my life colourful." It's no surprise, given her connection with The Rug Company, that she says it was all about the floors. A lot of the colour comes via the rugs. Her boldness often shocks friends, such as when she said she wanted a red stair runner. "They thought it would look very Hollywood," she says. But the Christine Van Der Hurd red silk dhurrie has a sensuous, liquid feel. "I love that it looks a little worn," she says.

Upstairs, the couple's bedroom is decorated in restful neutrals and has its own terrace. The master bathroom has a disco ball and silvery De Gournay wallpaper. "I don't close the blinds, though I probably should," says Annabel with a laugh.

The lower-ground floor is the heart of the home; a huge basement family room devoted to eating, playing and lounging that opens out to the garden. "My kids are lined up here in the morning," says Annabel. "We have lunch in the nook and dinner at the table." Standing in the living room, Annabel looks as though she might need to pinch herself. "I never imagined I'd be in a home like this; I grew up in Wisbech, a small town in Cambridgeshire." But here she is, a driving force behind this elegant home with a clever balance of grand gestures and cosy spaces. "We really use it all," she says. "To me, that's a testament to good design." **VL**

