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In a Manhattan apartment designed by John Saladino, 17th-century French wood paneling frames the media room/den. **ABOVE:** The floor plan. See Resources.

# A Fresh Take

In a legendary building on Manhattan's Upper West Side, decorator John Saladino gives new life to a longtime friend's apartment. Interview by Michael Lassell

**ELLE DECOR:** What was the occasion for the renovation of this apartment?

**JOHN SALADINO:** I've known the client for more than 30 years. She had been living on the Upper West Side, at the Aphorp, when her husband passed away. Since her three sons were all grown, she decided to downsize. We both saw a listing in *The New York Times* for this two-bedroom apartment in the Beresford, another one of New York's great buildings, and thought it would be perfect for her. When I saw how much light there was and how huge the wraparound terrace was, I knew she could be happy here, because she's a great gardener. The building is on Central Park West—I could see her planting bulbs while looking out at the park.

**ED:** Did you reconfigure the living areas?

**JS:** I extended the doors up to the ceilings, to increase the sense of space, and took down the wall between the kitchen and dining room, combining them into an eat-in kitchen big enough for her whole family. We partly stripped the crown moldings, but not all the way back to wood. I wanted to reference the past, to create that sense of layers appearing through each other. I did the same thing with the pilasters, which I moved from the long living room wall to the shorter end walls flanking the windows and doors. I wanted a light-filled modern envelope with intimations of history.

**ED:** The Beresford is one of the most prestigious prewar apartment buildings in D



## DESIGN SOLUTIONS

Manhattan. Did working in a historic structure present any particular issues?

**JS:** Certainly everything is subject to approval in a building like this. I'm fairly sure the only reason I was allowed to replace windows with French doors in the living room and master bedroom is that the parapet hides the bottoms of the doors when you look up from the street. But you want to be true to the character of any building. You don't want to get off an elevator in a New York City high rise and walk into a Santa Fe adobe-style home.

**ED:** What inspired your choices of colors and materials?

**JS:** The shortest answer is that green and pink are the client's favorite colors. The green in the living room—the whole living room color scheme—was inspired by a large painting that now hangs there. The client wanted a pink bedroom—of course, it's my kind of pink. Because the client is very much a lady, I wanted the place to be feminine, so I used a drapery fabric with a small-leaf motif, something I never do. The crewel table cover in the living room is vaguely floral, as is a subtle Fortuny table skirt. She has such an outgoing and sparkly personality that I chose iridescent materials, like the opalescent glass tiles in the kitchen and the fabric for the living room's quilted seat covers. ▶



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Saladino-designed sofas on the terrace, which has views of Central Park. The living room. A dining area on the terrace.



The master bedroom is outfitted with a bed and bench by Saladino.



The master bath window is dressed with sliding cotton panels.

**ED:** Your client already owned many pieces by you, as well as antiques and modern art. How did you manage to make it all come together?

**JS:** I actually like putting something old against something new, or juxtaposing something humble with something rare. It makes a space look younger and feel lively. My own pieces are designed to work in traditional or modern spaces. And most of the furniture is on casters, so you can move it around. The kitchen chairs are covered in leather, so the grandkids can spill jelly on them. But she can wheel the chairs into the living room if she needs extra seating—they'll look right at home beside the two antique leather side chairs there.

**ED:** You have a very distinctive style. How do you tailor the "updated antiquity" look you have evolved over many years to each individual project?

**JS:** Every job is different. You listen to your client. This place looks just like the woman who lives here. If I were doing a ranch in Wyoming, you would know that those homeowners rode horses, but you would know that I designed it. There wouldn't be any antler chandeliers. ■

#### WHAT THE PROS KNOW

- Saladino covered one of his own settees in a velvety eggplant fabric to create a dark contrast within the airy living room, making it appear even lighter. "We don't see colors in isolation," he instructs. "We see them playing off each other."
- The designer grounded the main seating area with an Oriental rug. But since it wasn't big enough for the space, he laid sisal underneath. He also recommends placing extra-wide double-sided tape under the sides, with a big X in the middle, to keep the rug in place.
- The bedroom draperies, which have the visual weight of a duvet, consist of layers of fabric, including a pearlescent pink silk, a lining fabric, an aluminum-weave blackout lining sandwiched between them, and felt.