

FEBRUARY 2011

# House Beautiful

## makeovers!

problems solved

**LIVING ROOM  
BEFORE & AFTER**  
(DO IT IN A DAY!)

**REFRESH  
YOUR SOFA**  
(WITH PILLOWS!)



**NEW** TYLER FLORENCE *in the* KITCHEN

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*Interior design by*  
GARROW KEDIGIAN

*Architecture by*  
ALEXANDER GORLIN

*Interview by*  
MIMI READ

*Photographs by*  
PIETER ESTERSOHN

# URBAN RENEWAL

**MAKEOVER!**

**PROBLEM**

- CLAUSTROPHOBIC ROOMS
- INTERRUPTED VIEWS
- PEPTO-BISMOL PINK WALLS

**SOLVED**

- OPEN, LOFTLIKE PLAN
- WIDER DOORWAYS
- NEUTRAL COLORS

Pale gold curtains softly frame iron casement windows and impart a warm glow to a Manhattan dining room, where designer Garrow Kedigian created a contemporary but timeless mood. Room & Board dining chairs are covered in Nancy Corzine's Cavallo. OPPOSITE: A 16th-century gilt-wood statue from China stands serenely in the entry between the dining room and living room.







Kedigian created three distinct seating areas in the living room, all connected by the custom Stark rug; the "exploded" Greek key motif echoes the geometric lines of the windows. An antique silk screen is embellished with calligraphy from an ancient Chinese poem. Its "calm strength" set the tone for the rest of the apartment, Kedigian says. The white-painted bergère is covered in Peggy by Clarence House.

**MIMI READ:** This strikes me as a gentleman's apartment—someone sophisticated, possibly scholarly.

**GARROW KEDIGIAN:** It does have a masculine undertone. In part, that's my style—a streamlined classicism. But actually, a family lives here, a couple with two young children. She's a magazine publisher. He's an Englishman who deals in Asian antiques.

**He clearly has a passion for it. There are Asian elements in every room. Who's the divine being gracing the entry?**

That's Avalokiteshvara, a Buddhist deity. The minute you walk in the front door, you know you've arrived at the home of—how can I put it?—old souls.

**Well, those iron casement windows are, to me, the soul of old New York.**

Oh, they exemplify the character of the whole place! All the small panes give you more of a sense of coziness, of enclosure, than a large window. In the living and dining rooms I dramatized them by framing them with very light, airy curtains that have a yellowy base tone and a subtle iridescent quality, so even on a gray day, they glow. This was a beautiful apartment, even from the start—those dramatic windows, the 10-foot walls, the beamed ceilings. It's a classic prewar apartment, but late prewar, so all the detailing is simple and subtle. And the renovation was respectful to the integrity of the architecture.

**Who was the architect?**

Alexander Gorlin. He's so good even Daniel Libeskind, the master-plan architect for the rebuilding of the World Trade Center site, hired him to renovate his loft.

**My goodness! An architect hiring another architect to design his home? Impressive.**

Libeskind explained it by saying, 'A barber doesn't give himself a haircut.'

**How much did Gorlin do to it?**

In typical prewar fashion, it was divided into lots of small rooms. It was claustrophobic, which was exacerbated by its being overstuffed with furniture, so Alexander basically cleaned up the plan and gave it a modern flow of space.

**Can you elaborate?**

It's a linear space. He took down the wall between the living room and dining room and replaced it with a framed opening, so you can look clear through to the north and south views. There's almost a loftlike feeling. He also took down the doors leading from the entry vestibule and then widened the doorways, for a more modern look.

The kitchen and master bath were enlarged, and where moldings were skimpy, he made them more robust.

**So you took over after the renovation. What was your first move?**

The entire place was Pepto-Bismol pink. It was a very unfortunate tone, not a cheerful pink. And it had many layers of grime on it. The first thing we did was prime it all out in white so we could understand how light worked in the space. We ended up painting everything Benjamin Moore Linen White or Natural Wicker. We didn't want walls with personality. We wanted them to be a neutral ground for the art. Those extraordinarily powerful screens, which project such a calm strength, absolutely dictated a neutral color palette.

**How did that pink sofa sneak into the living room?**

I felt we needed one spot of color in the foreground to magnetically draw you into the room—and it had to be pink. The only way I got my client to agree to it was to plead my case for weeks—and promise her that if she didn't like it, I'd pay to have the sofa re-covered.

**Why pink?**

As much as I love the sophisticated calmness of the living room, it needed a yin-yang element, some kind of push-pull. The walls were animated so beautifully with art, and I wanted to bring some of that excitement to the center of the room. Pink is the foreign element. It's playful and uplifting.

**I'm interested in the way you've layered so many patterns and textures in the bedroom.**

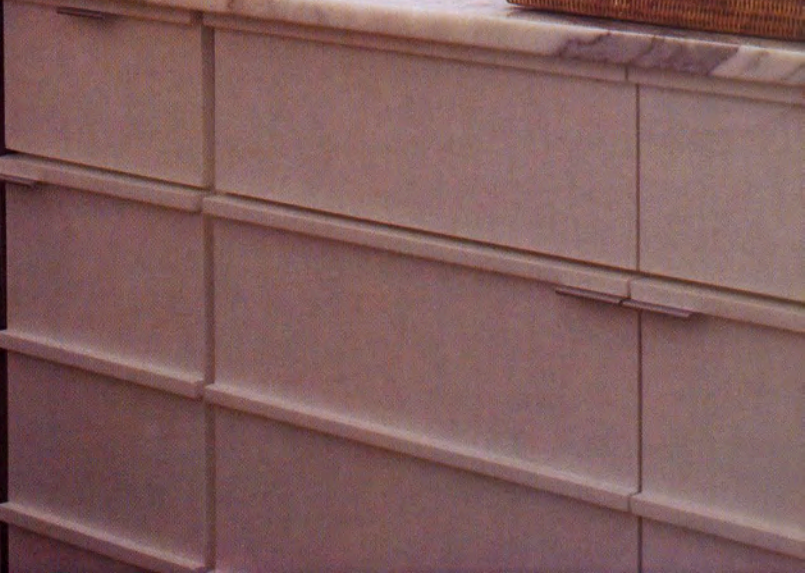
When you don't use a lot of color, pattern and texture become more important. I layered all different sorts of organic patterns to make it feel kind of rustic-modern. The ikat curtains are a less structured pattern, and I like them against the geometric, rectilinear pattern of the rug. The headboard fabric reminds me of the bark of a tree. The bed bench is covered in a tiger pattern, but tamed—it's just quiet tone-on-tone. I also wanted everything to be soft and tactile, starting with the faux-lynx throw on the bed. I had that made.

**You seem to have a full-blown Greek key obsession.**

Here it's perfect, because it echoes the grid of all the windows. That Greek key mirror in the living room came first. And when it came time to anchor the three furniture groups in there, we needed a dramatic carpet—a shock factor, really—to pull the room together. I adapted this one, scaling the Greek key much larger than the standard. I see the Greek key as one of those great sustainable elements in the history of design. It transcends time.

The kitchen is "a contemporary interpretation of a classic prewar space," Kedigian says. "It's pure, simple, and white." The cabinetry has a gridded detail that borrows its lines from the windows. Bamboo chairs are 18th-century Chinese. Countertops are Calacatta Gold marble. Viking range; Logico handblown glass suspension light by Artemide.







TOP: Horizontal biscuit tufting gives the master bedroom's headboard a plush elegance. ABOVE: Kedigian designed the mid-century-style dresser and topped it with an oversize mantel mirror. RIGHT: The room is a mix of many patterns, but the neutral colors keep it calm. Outside the window is an inscription on a Hunter College building by Ralph Waldo Emerson: "We are of different opinions at different hours but we always may be said to be at heart on the side of truth." Curtains in Kravet's Passage. Bedcovering is Linx by Old World Weavers.







In the library, Kedigian used another blown-up geometric rug and another Greek key motif. The custom rug is by Stark. Pillows are Labyrinth by Clarence House. Curtains are Mokum's Matterhorn. Walls are painted Pale Almond by Benjamin Moore. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES

