

DESIGN AT ITS BEST

HOUSE & GARDEN

JANUARY 2004

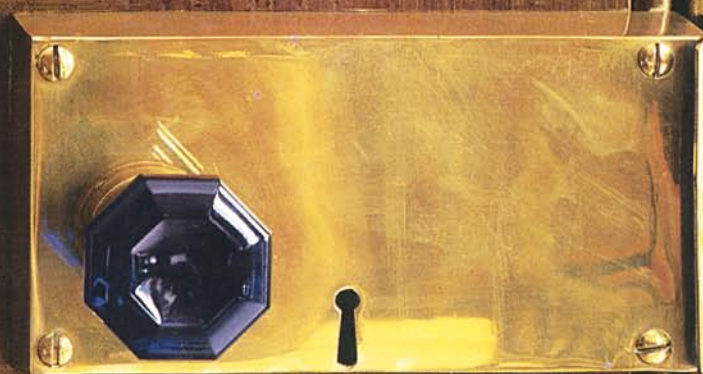
Restoring, Renovating & Building

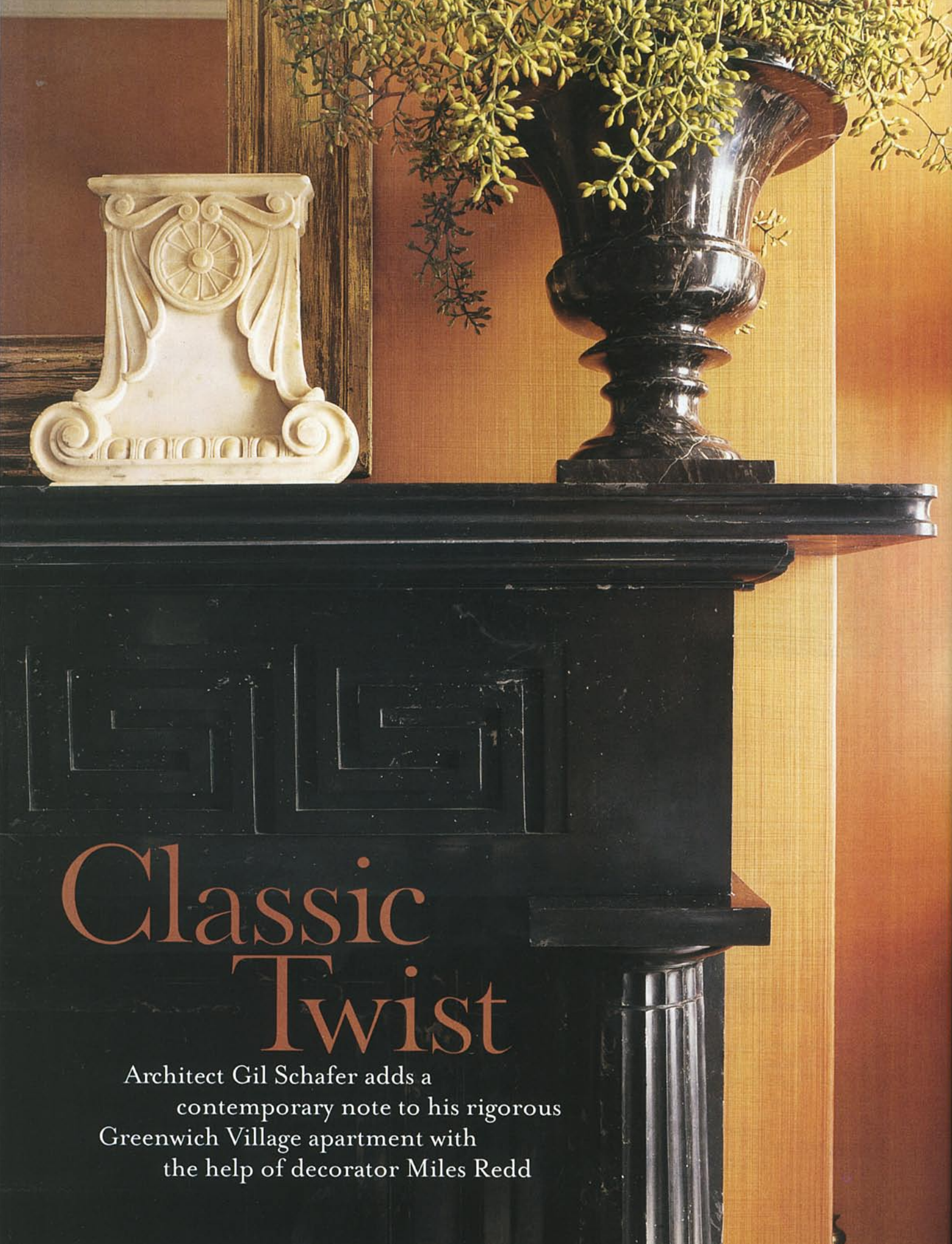
DECORATING
A NEW HOUSE
(HOW TO MAKE IT MODERN
BUT COMFORTABLE)

RESTORING
A 200-YEAR-OLD
FARMHOUSE

RENOVATING
A 1960s CLASSIC

HARDWARE
THE BEST NEW DOORKNOBS,
HINGES & LATCHES





Classic Twist

Architect Gil Schafer adds a
contemporary note to his rigorous
Greenwich Village apartment with
the help of decorator Miles Redd



Schafer added architectural heft to the room by designing a mantel in black scagliola, opposite page, and Ionic columns that separate the living room from a small gallery area, this page. Regency side chairs from Sutter Antiques, Hudson, NY. Gallery walls upholstered in Rogers & Goffigon's Putti wool felt in Espresso. Orange crosshatched glazing covers the other walls.

The neoclassical elegance of the second parlor is established by the symmetrical frame of two huge Ionic columns. They were designed to accommodate and emphasize the scale of the dramatic 13-foot ceilings

Consistency is Gil Schafer's hallmark. He is chairman of the Institute of Classical Architecture & Classical America, and a Yale School of Architecture graduate, and his work is deeply rooted in tradition. Viewing the world on paper is second nature to him, so when he was faxed a floor plan of an apartment for sale in a mid-nineteenth-century town house in Greenwich Village, he was drawn to its triple parlor with triple chimney configuration. Upon inspection, even the modernist overlay installed by former tenants did not discourage him. "I wanted to tell a different story and pretend that an eighteenth-thirties space stood behind the redbrick facade," he says.

Classical vernacular is also second nature to him. His grandfather and great-great-grandfather were architects, and Schafer worked for almost a decade at Ferguson, Shamamian & Rattner Architects before establishing his own firm, G. P. Schafer Architect. He has also built a Greek Revival house in upstate New York whose character blends seamlessly with the surrounding early-nineteenth-century structures.

When it comes to personal endeavors, however, the unabashed historicist is quick to recognize his shortcomings. "As my own client, I am far too rigid," he admits. Once he got his hands on the floor-through apartment, he enlisted good friend and decorator Miles Redd. A lighthearted pragmatist, Redd proved the perfect foil for the new owner's instincts. Schafer's initial impulse had





TRADE SECRETS FURNITURE For the living room wall, Schafer designed a massive mahogany bookcase. The sofa, far left, was custom-made by Trade France. The upholstered armchair is George Smith's Standard chair. FABRICS Armchair slipcover in Robert Kime's Susani, through John Rosselli International. Sofa in Clarence House's Velours Gascogne in Auburn. ACCENTS Custom brass book lights by Robert Kime, through John Rosselli International.



SCHAFER'S FINISHING TOUCH

For a glimpse into the design mind of Gil Schafer, above, look at his apartment's entry doors, which are a fine example of this classicist's attention to detail.

➤ **A DOOR FRAME**, below, in the Greek Revival style of Minard Lafever surrounds three-panel mahogany doors.

➤ **FAUX FINISHING** Jean Carrau, a decorative painter in New York City, hand-painted the wood grain and ebonized the interior panel borders, right, adding layers of French polish for a deep, burnished finish that heightens the illusion.

➤ **LOCKING UP** Schafer completes the door with a patinated brass rim lock and a cobalt blue crystal knob from E. R. Butler & Co., a specialist in Early American hardware reproductions.



The size of the faux-grain mahogany paneled doors makes them a centerpiece of the apartment. Their color helps to unify the earthen tones of the entire scheme, and their mass echoes the scale of the other elements

been to restore the sequential scheme, re-creating the formal double parlor as entertaining space. Redd objected to such rigorous handling, urging Schafer to keep an eye on the twenty-first century and forgo symmetry. "You need to furnish the entire front as one big living room and not worry about some old-fashioned orientation toward a fireplace," Redd suggested. "You do have central heating."

In one fell swoop, the existing arch between the twin front parlors was demolished. A heavy-handed Victorian white marble fire

surround was removed, and in its place there is now a handsome, black-veined, French-polished scagliola mantelpiece. Inspired by a design in an Asher Benjamin pattern book, its fluted columns and Greek key frieze appear centuries old. Meanwhile, in the second parlor, where another chimney breast was abandoned long ago, a vast mahogany bookcase built by Laszlo Sallay anchors the wall. Shelves brimming with books also accommodate an enormous plasma-screen television, which, the architect concedes, is "a reality more essential than a second fireplace."

Schafer's neoclassical vocabulary is well suited to the impressive scale of the 13-foot

ceilings. After removing the existing modernist skin, he added structural bones such as deeply recessed plaster crown moldings, articulated door surrounds, and shutters for the French doors facing the tree-lined street. The opposite end of the room is symmetrically screened with his architectural triumph, two soaring Ionic columns whose proportions echo the height and scale of the windows. The effect is grand.

The importance of quality craftsmanship underlies every element of the apartment. Faux-grain mahogany and ebonized paneled doors masterfully painted by Jean Carrau have a weighty mass that unifies the entire plan. The doors open and close like a precision instrument and are fitted with custom-patinated brass hardware created by Rhett Butler of E. R. Butler & Co. An object lesson in component anatomy, the doors feature rim locks, strikes, key escutcheons, thumb turns, dead bolts, cane bolts, peepholes, olive knuckle hinges, and cobalt glass knobs. Elegant doorstops in the floor prevent the doors from slamming into the walls. ➤



TRADE SECRETS FURNITURE In the dining area, this page, an English Regency breakfast table from Quiet Street Antiques, Bath, England, is surrounded by Regency chairs from Sotheby's, NYC. TABLETOP French 19th-century water goblets from Lucullus, New Orleans, are paired with ruby glassware that Schafer has collected over the years. Ridgway's Imari plates and tureen, ca. 1885, Sotheby's. Silverware by James Robinson, NYC. CARPET Diamond-patterned sisal, Stark.



TRADE SECRETS

MATERIALS Negro Marquina marble was used for the master bathroom's tub niche, sink top, and floor, right, where it is inlaid with polished nickel. **FIXTURES** Glass and nickel sink stand, below, custom-made by Urban Archaeology, NYC. Nickel faucet set by Barber Wilson's, through George Taylor Specialties, NYC. **FURNISHINGS** The master dressing room, bottom, seen from the bedroom, has cabinetry with mirrored doors. French mahogany dresser from Sutter Antiques, Hudson, NY.




When it comes to color, Schafer prefers earthen hues. The cross-hatched glazes in the living room are an intriguing autumnal shade of orange, the hallways are covered in a tobacco brown felt, and the bedroom walls are tailored with an olive green and chocolate striped silk. Such a rich palette creates a warm backdrop for the predominantly nineteenth-century English and Continental furniture, objects, paintings, and drawings. "I moved here from an apartment with eight-foot ceilings, so there was a challenge to build up appropriate scale," he says. In the bedroom, for instance, that meant designing a Louis XVI-style steel campaign bed inspired by one he had seen in Jacques Grange's apartment. Fabricated by Jean Wiart, the delicate four-poster frame stretches elegantly toward the ceiling, adding a vertical lift to the compact sleeping quarters. By contrast, Schafer enjoys the luxury of an adjacent dressing room whose mirrored cupboard doors on two walls reflect an oversized mahogany chest of drawers. "His penchant for furniture with scale shows real pluck," says veteran antiques dealer Niall Smith. "That dressing room is incredible."

Indeed, the dressing room is a bit of unexpected glamour. Schafer has no trouble explaining this departure. "A few years ago, I went on a trip to Chicago," he says. "We visited houses designed by David Adler, someone I truly admire. I think it taught me to have more fun with architectural language, and not be quite so literal."

Pausing for emphasis and pointing to a brass knob on the wall, he asks, "Have you ever seen one of these?" Then he grabs the protruding sphere and, as if by magic, a telescopic hanging rod slides out of the wall. "Good for dry cleaning," he says. □

FABRICS Rich fabrics are the focus of the master bedroom, opposite page. Walls are upholstered in Travers's Kenwood Stripe in Olive and Taupe. Curtains are in a discontinued Henry Calvin flannel in Olive, trimmed with Clarence House's Bullion Marabout fringe. The French campaign-style bed is covered with a custom duvet in Holland & Sherry's Highland tweed; a suede headboard and bed skirt is in Dualoy's Tobacco suede.



A photograph of a compact bedroom. On the right, a Louis XVI-style four-poster bed with a dark wood headboard and a tall, thin metal frame is visible. The bed is made with white pillows and a brown and white striped duvet. To the left of the bed is a wooden desk with a lamp that has a yellow shade. On the desk are various items including a small globe, a vase with a palm frond, and some books. Behind the desk is a tall, dark wood bookshelf filled with books. On the wall above the desk are three framed pictures: a landscape, a still life, and a portrait. A round mirror is also on the wall. The room has a striped wallpaper and a patterned rug. A window with a plant is on the far left.

A delicate, Louis XVI-style
four-poster bed
reaches up to the ceiling,
lifting and lightening
the atmosphere of
the compact bedroom