MARCH–APRIL 2014
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Classic Revival

A YOUNG FAMILY'S SENSITIVE RENOVATION RESPECTS THEIR HOME'S HISTORY TO YIELD A FRESH TAKE ON TRADITION.

INTERIOR DESIGN BY **ROB SOUTHERN** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **PETER MURDOCK**
PRODUCED BY **RICH MICHELS** WRITTEN BY **EMILY EVANS EERDMANS**

Contemporary art balances traditional elements. Dennis & Leen bench with custom cushion in Manuel Canovas fabric. Vintage French sconces. Art, John Rosis. OPPOSITE: Custom armchairs in Donghia white velvet and Christopher Farr Cloth linen. 19th-c. English gilded pouf in Dedar fabric. Vintage Baguès coffee table. Throw, Sferra. Rug, Patterson, Flynn & Martin. OPENING PAGES: Custom chairs in Jerry Pair fabric. 19th-c. French chandelier. Walls in Brunschwig & Fils velvet. Gustavian daybed with pillow in Osborne & Little silk. Curtains of a Holland & Sherry silk.

"TIMELESS" IS A WORD DESIGNER ROB SOUTHERN USES OFTEN WHEN DESCRIBING THE GRACIOUS PREWAR APARTMENT ON MANHATTAN'S UPPER EAST SIDE HE COMPLETED RECENTLY FOR A YOUNG FAMILY. AS SOUTHERN EXPLAINS, "THE CLIENTS WANTED this home to really hold its own as they changed and grew—it was like not having to replace a dress that's gone out of style in five years' time."

Showcasing the apartment's spectacular light and river views was the departure point for the decoration, but the first task was restoring the 6,000-square-foot residence to its 1930s classical bones, including raising the ceilings back to their original 10-and-a-half-foot height. "We were very careful to put back what wasn't intact in a way that looked like it would have been original," says Southern. "And it had to be a home that a family could enjoy. They live in every inch of the house."

In the interconnecting main rooms, luminous blues were chosen for the walls—rendered in lacquer, silk velvet, and Venetian plaster—to harmonize with the outdoors regardless of whether the sky is bright or gray, the foliage rust-hued or grassy green. Deep walnut–stained floors and dark accents ground the pastel scheme. "If we hadn't tempered these soft colors with rich woods, it would have run the risk of not being serious enough," says Southern. "There's a fine line between playfulness and color."

To keep a visual flow throughout the spaces, he eschewed using floorcoverings in every room. "All the rooms have this very French feeling, where one room goes into another. You can stand in the entrance hall and basically see them all. I was sensitive to this place becoming a rug story—I didn't want five different rugs, and I also didn't want five exactly-the-same rugs."

In the same vein, he veered away from printed fabrics in general. "You can't go wrong with solids, because a

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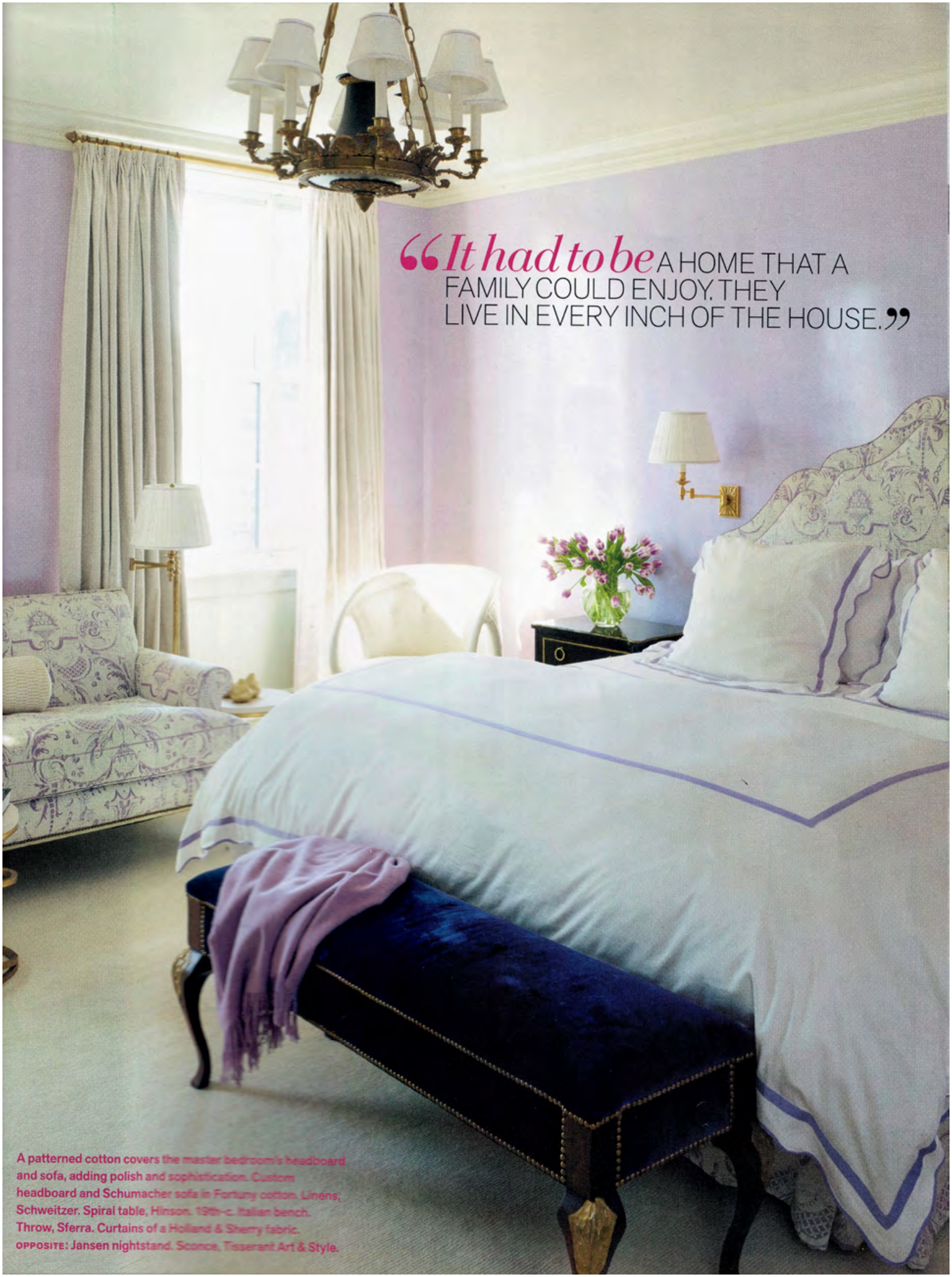
A pared-down palette looks luxurious when rendered in duchesse satin and leather. Custom sofa in Jane Churchill fabric. Table lamp, John Rosselli Antiques. Curtains of a Holland & Sherry fabric. Art, Leora Armstrong (left) and Pat Steir. OPPOSITE, TOP: Custom sofa and armchairs in Holland & Sherry fabric. Light fixture, Jacques Garcia for Baker. Coffee table, Hinson. Sconces, Tisserant Art & Style. OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: Stool in Quadrille fabric. Rug, Patterson, Flynn & Martin. Art, Robert Kelly.

color is not something that becomes dated," he explains. "Patterns often have a tag to them: 'Oh, that's a French toile,' or 'That's a chintz.' Solid colors also keep any one thing from being the main focus. When the clients are in the room, they should be the stars."

Southern especially dislikes using lots of patterns in dining rooms, because of the constraints they add: "'My plate doesn't look good with that,' or 'Last season's flowers don't look right,'" he says. "It's a mantra of mine: You shouldn't be restricted because the room is decorated in such a way. The dining room should be a canvas for the beautiful flowers, beautiful silverware, beautiful plates, and the people who are at the table."

Affirming his philosophy that each project should be tailored precisely to the client's needs and wants, Southern accessorized sparingly, leaving the family space to expand or rearrange as desired.

"When you go into a modern loft apartment that is very chic and clean, the minute you throw down the schoolbooks, it loses the vibe," says the wife, who lauds Southern's ability to create a home where the demands of family life don't compromise the integrity of the design. "He created a beautiful family apartment that is truly *ours*." □



A patterned cotton covers the master bedroom's headboard and sofa, adding polish and sophistication. Custom headboard and Schumacher sofa in Fortuny cotton. Linens, Schweitzer. Spiral table, Hinson. 19th-c. Italian bench. Throw, Sferra. Curtains of a Holland & Sherry fabric. OPPOSITE: Jansen nightstand. Sconce, Tisserant Art & Style.