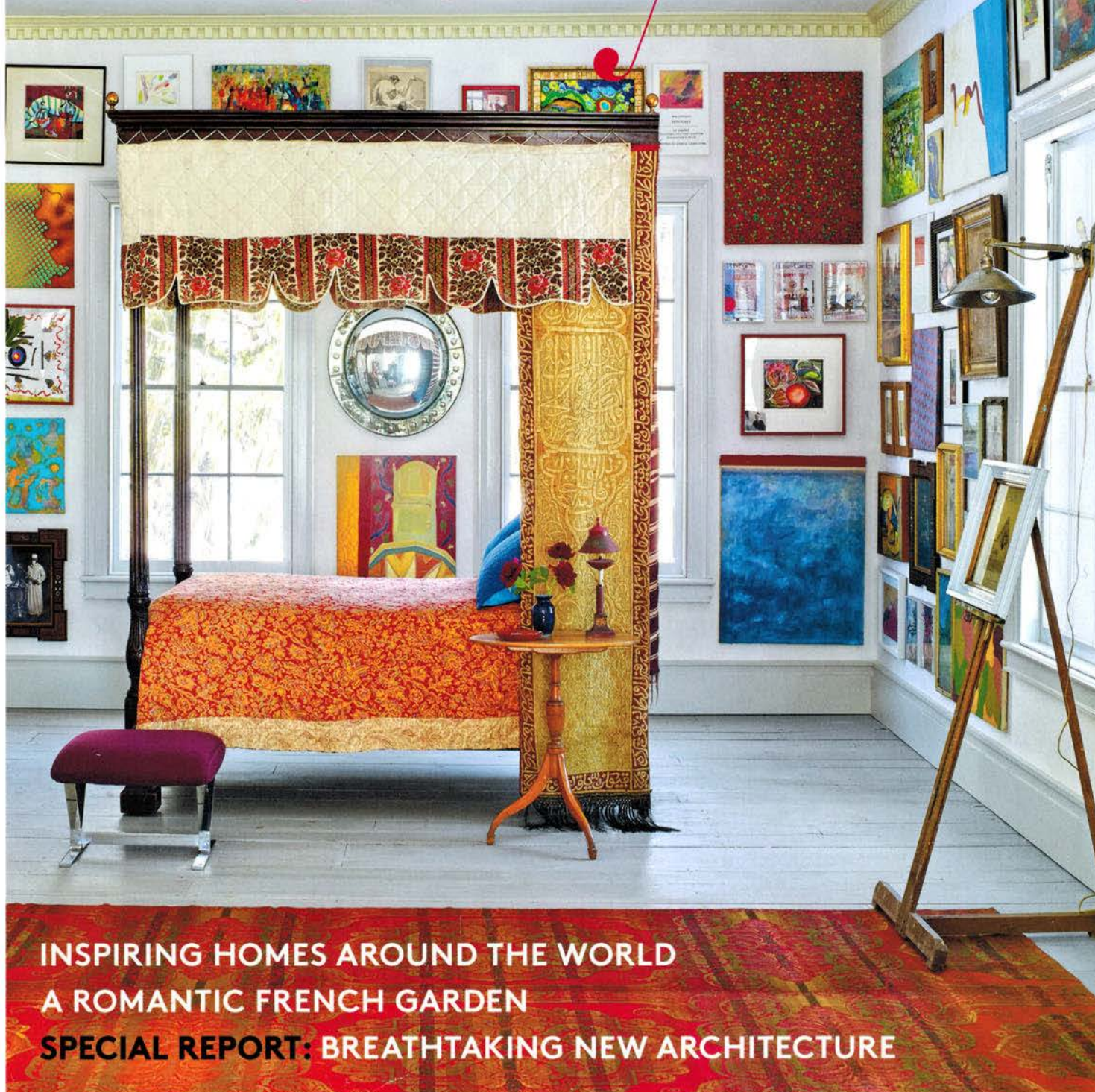


# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AUTHORITY

FEBRUARY 2016

## THE POWER OF **Style**



INSPIRING HOMES AROUND THE WORLD

A ROMANTIC FRENCH GARDEN

SPECIAL REPORT: BREATHTAKING NEW ARCHITECTURE



# SIBLING REVELRY

Interior designer Eric Cohler puts his sensationally chic stamp on a Gramercy Park triplex for his tech-entrepreneur brother





TEXT BY DAPHNE MERKIN  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PIETER ESTERSON  
PRODUCED BY HOWARD CHRISTIAN

A faux suede covers the living room walls in Silicon Valley tech entrepreneur Matt Cohler's Manhattan triplex, which was decorated by Eric Cohler Design and previously renovated by Michael Haverland Architect. Artworks by, from left, Alfred Seiland, Caio Fonseca, and James Brooks overlook the seating area; the sofa is by Ralph Lauren Home. For details see Sources.







When interior designer Eric Cohler went scouting for a Manhattan pied-à-terre for his brother Matt, one of Silicon Valley's most dynamic venture capitalists, he was initially thinking of a low-key rental.

But that changed when the siblings walked into an 1840s redbrick townhouse overlooking historic Gramercy Park. Previously broken up into several apartments, the building had been reconfigured a few years earlier into two glamorous triplexes by architect Michael Haverland, and as soon as the Cohlers stepped into the lower unit, they both thought the same thing: This is it.

With a guest room and kitchenette in the English basement, entertaining areas on the parlor floor, and three bedrooms on the third level, the triplex certainly had a lot going for it, in particular its high ceilings, three fireplaces, and abundant windows, among them two sets of French doors opening to Juliet balconies with

views of the park's gated greenery. Drawbacks included a floor plan that resembles a barbell (on each level spacious end rooms are linked by a hall) and the inherent narrowness—the building is only 26 feet wide—that comes with the territory. Still, the designer saw those limitations as a challenge. "I'm at my best with tight parameters," Eric confides. "You can't expand laterally in a townhouse. If you're not careful, it can feel not only cramped but forced."

Known for combining 18th- and 20th-century furniture with an up-to-the-minute sensibility, the designer went to work making the apartment into a peaceful refuge for a client with a notably high-octane career. A onetime musician and one of Facebook's first five hires, Matt is now a general partner at the farsighted venture-capital giant Benchmark, and he cofounded FWD.us, an organization that supports immigration reform and is made up of leaders in the tech community. He also sits on multiple boards, including those of Instagram, Tinder, and the online antiques bazaar 1stdibs, as well as the San Francisco Symphony. →



The dramatic staircase is lined with panels painted a Benjamin Moore white. **Opposite:** Curtains made with a Holland & Sherry linen and trim accentuate the dining room's height; the Jules Leleu table from Maison Gerard is encircled by T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbings chairs upholstered in an Edelman leather, while a British abstract painting hangs at right.





As an antidote to the frenetic pace of Matt's work life, the triplex's front door opens to a soothing palette of earthy neutrals. In the entrance gallery, as throughout the main level, Haverland-designed paneling with an overscale grid motif has been painted a crisp white. Complementing the foyer's woodwork is a fluffy Moroccan-style diamond-pattern runner that's rolled out before a Michael Taylor travertine console table flanked by circa-1905 Josef Hoffmann chairs cushioned in their original leather. Above hangs Richard Avedon's infamous shot of actress Nastassja Kinski being embraced by a Burmese python, part of a small but powerful art collection that features eye-grabbing images by Lotte Jacobi, Edward Weston, and Ellen von Unwerth. "Matt doesn't like the word *collector*," his brother explains, "but if he were to be classified as one, it would be of photography."

The living and dining rooms, located at opposite ends of the parlor floor, share an intimate yet sophisticated air that comes from their irreverent mix of furnishings, colors, and metallic accents. Both spaces have similarly neutral background tones—the living room's faux-suede walls are mushroom color, the dining room's paneling is golden oak—but they have distinct moods. In the latter, at the rear of the building, an orange Perle Fine painting overlooks a vintage Jules Leleu oval table surrounded by Directoire-inspired chairs by T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbings. Built-in oak bookcases ascend a dozen feet, their shelves accessed by a custom-made ladder so the volumes can be read rather than merely looked at from afar. Pride of place has been given to a circa-1912 Steinway grand piano that was inherited from one of the Cohlers' great-grandmothers. "I like to play Bach, but I'm not very good," admits Matt, who occasionally hosts small but festive gatherings when in town.

While the dining room is quietly chic, the living room's vibe is decidedly livelier, thanks in part to a luminous red-and-white abstract canvas by Caio Fonseca and two large blue-hued works, one by painter James Brooks and the other by photographer Alfred Seiland. Atop the quarter-sawn white-oak floor is a marvelous, motley array of furnishings, among them Louis XVI painted armchairs, a curious stool cushioned with shaggy Mongolian lambswool, and a classic Chanel-style suede-covered sofa that Eric describes as "deep enough for napping."

Up the slender, dramatically paneled staircase and past a Von Unwerth photograph of model Nadja Auermann in a black lace cat mask is the master bedroom, a paean to tranquillity, where the same creamy fabric (one of Eric Cohler's own designs for Lee Jofa) is used for the walls, curtains, and headboard. Furthering the cocooning effect are dove-gray carpeting and a sound-deadening layer of cotton batting under the wall upholstery. "Matt travels a lot," his brother notes, "so we wanted a room that would invite slumber. The only interactive element is the fireplace—there's not even a television." Down the hall, though, is the mischievously unrestrained library, painted a glossy persimmon.

Cultured yet without a hint of ostentation, the residence is precisely what Eric and his like-minded brother were aiming for—welcoming and absolutely cozy. "Because at the end of the day," the designer says, "true luxury boils down to comfort." □





West Elm pendant lights illuminate the kitchen, which is equipped with Varenna by Poliform oak cabinetry, a Sub-Zero refrigerator, a Corian backsplash and countertop, and Dornbracht sink fittings.





A custom-mixed persimmon paint splashes the library, where an Ormond Gigli photograph surveys a vintage T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbings sofa in a Loro Piana Interiors fabric. The lamps are by Simon Pearce, the 1950s Italian lounge chairs are clad in a velvet by Eric Cohler Design for Lee Jofa, and the cocktail table is from Flair.





"TRUE LUXURY  
BOILS DOWN TO  
COMFORT," SAYS  
ERIC COHLER.







**Above:** The master bath features Heath Ceramics tile and a Corian countertop; the tub fittings and sink fittings are by Waterworks. **Right:** A wool by Eric Cohler for Lee Jofa is used for the master bedroom's walls, curtains, and Roman shades; the Eve Kaplan gilded mirror is from Gerald Bland, the fox-fur throw is by Holland & Sherry, and the rug is by Beauvais Carpets.





