

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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ABOVE: A 19TH-CENTURY GARDEN APARTMENT WITH ANTIQUE CHINESE (HAKERCOOKS PRINCE) AND A SLEEPING ROOM (PETHURILL) COVERED IN WALLPAPER BY FREDERICK MARSHALL, OF THE 18TH-CENTURY FURNITURE (TALLON) A LOBBY AND STAIRS BY GARDNER, HANCOCK BRICKA (LAVENDER) EXPORT OILY WOOD, B&B, AND RECONSTRUCTED LANTERN-HANGING WOODS (SUNNY) (AMERICAN) (JAMES) (LIVING) ON THE 18TH-CENTURY, WHICH IS LINED WITH WALLPAPER BY K&B, DECORATIVE ARTS.

AGAM LIPPES IS PART OF that long line of American fashion designers who live as stylishly as any of their clients, a tradition that includes Oscar de la Renta, Bill Blass, and, of course, Ralph Lauren. Lippes has transformed numerous homes, and many have ended up in the pages of *AD*. There's the firm in the Berkshires (*AD*, June 2024), which he still has, and a series of New York residences he has shared with his partner, Alexander Farnsworth, a cannabis entrepreneur. These have included a penthouse on lower Fifth Avenue, a Brooklyn Heights apartment (*AD*, July/August 2009), and a duplex on Washington Square Park (*AD*, September 2004), all of them featuring an abundance of sunlight, soft colors, floral fabrics, and a mix of antique and vintage pieces. "Interior design is such a passion for me," the designer says. "It's the most challenging creative act."

But fashion changes, and so do fashion designers. "I thought I would always live downtown," Lippes says. "Then the pandemic hit. When we could finally go back to work, I needed to be in Manhattan. For a while, I stayed at the Four Seasons hotel. At that point, I was thinking maybe I might move full-time to the country. Frankly, I wasn't even sure my business would survive." But as his sales began to revive, so did his passion for the city. He had the opportunity to stay in an apartment uptown. "And as it turned out, I fell in love with the Upper East Side. So, I started looking. And, wow, did I take a big bite."

The duplex apartment he found, on Fifth Avenue across from the Central Park Zoo, was in a mansion built for a coal baron



in 1880, with interiors then considered to be among the most sumptuous in the city. Indeed, walking into the main room, with its richly carved and gilded wood paneling, marble-clad fireplace, tall arched windows, and heavily ornamented ceiling is to step back in time to an era even more opulent than our own. But the place had been vacant for more than a decade, he learned, and was in dire straits. "I immediately loved it," says Lippes, but he hesitated. "I wasn't sure I had another renovation in me." Farnsworth, on the other hand, was not at all ambivalent. "I saw it for the first time on a horrible dark night in February, with the building obscured in scaffolding," he says. "Yet even then, I knew the place was incredibly special."

But the renovation would be major—an update of all the mechanicals, the carving out of a small kitchen from what had been a pantry, and a complete redo of the lower level. And then there was the matter of dealing with that overwhelming main room. "My first thought," says Lippes, "was that a grand space would need grand furniture." He began scouting dealers and auction houses around the globe. "At one point I had so much furniture in here, it looked like I was an antique-dealer," he jokes. "That's when I realized I was going about it all wrong."

He was stumped. "I even considered painting all of that brown wood," he says. "I was inspired by the Palm Beach house that Stephen Mills did for Aerin Lauder G&D, July/August 2023. I felt I needed the input of someone like Mills or François-Joseph Graf in Paris. I got very close to making that call."





IN THE BEDROOM, AN 18TH-CENTURY ITALIAN CHAIR WITH A BLUE CUSHION AND A SMALL TABLE WITH A TEAPOT AND FLOWERS. THE MIRROR REFLECTS THE BEDROOM, WHICH IS THE MAIN ROOM OF THE HOUSE. THE MIRROR IS A 19TH-CENTURY ITALIAN WORK, AND THE CHAIR IS A 19TH-CENTURY ITALIAN WORK. THE MIRROR IS A 19TH-CENTURY ITALIAN WORK, AND THE CHAIR IS A 19TH-CENTURY ITALIAN WORK. THE MIRROR IS A 19TH-CENTURY ITALIAN WORK, AND THE CHAIR IS A 19TH-CENTURY ITALIAN WORK.



Lipps ultimately decided both to embrace the grandeur of the room and, at the same time, undercut it with comfort and ease. To execute his design vision, he reached out to Pilar Sukhag, who had worked as his fit model for years before turning to interior design. Out went many of the fancy items with their fancy provenance. In came low-slung white slipcovered seating and an oversized animal-print ottoman. A curvy gold sofa with Napoleon III-style trim sits beneath windows fitted with sheer panels embroidered by the same Indian atelier he uses for his dresses. Mirrors inset into the paneling now bounce light around the room. The neo-Egyptian bed from Jonathan Boland is one of his early purchases that made the final cut. The late-19th-century chandelier, gracing under its bounty of porcelain flowers, was found in Paris. "It's actually six feet tall," Lipps says, "but in this room, it doesn't look it."

The lower level became three distinct spaces. The primary bedroom is like a cloud of seafoam green, the walls and windows and bed swathed in silk moiré. "It's super powerful," he adds. "We feel like we live in the country." One guest room is treated in a subtle stripe, the other is a shadery retreat fitted with an 18th-century Chinese bed. All are linked by immersive scenic wallpapers by Ilse Crawford.

Meanwhile, Lipps's business has thrived, with retail outlets opening in Houston, Palm Beach, and Osaka. In addition to leather goods and a tailoring line with Zoé de Givenchy, a jewelry collection is in the works. Plus, the renovation continues, with plans to fit out the outdoor spaces on the lower level for entertaining. "I've got a lot of bulls in the air," the designer says with a smile. "I'm definitely in my imagination era."



TOP: A 19TH-CENTURY ITALIAN CHAIR WITH A BLUE CUSHION. BOTTOM: LIPPS IN HIS HOME.



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