

INTERIOR
DESIGN

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homes

quiet
reflections



When David Mann first saw the pre-war apartment on Manhattan's Upper East Side it had not just one maid's room off the kitchen, but a veritable warren of them, once the accommodations for a full complement of live-in staff. But being waited on hand and foot was simply not how his clients, a couple with three school-age children (and, now, a puppy), intended to live in their new home. The wife, the primary point of contact for Mann and his staff at MR Architecture + Decor, wanted a beautiful home for her family in the 3,900-square-foot third-floor space—but not a formal one. "She envisioned rooms that weren't too precious, where her kids would feel comfortable," Mann explains. "She also wanted

them to be personal and bit eccentric."

New York-based Mann orchestrated an extensive renovation that reconfigured the apartment's entire back end. Gutting the servant quarters yielded four proper bedrooms, each with en suite bath, plus a new powder room. But the design team preserved the layout and generous proportions of the public rooms, which surround a rectangular foyer. They also retained the two fireplaces—including the living room's original Gothic Revival mantel—and replicated the handsome deep-set casement windows.

Those windows not only admit abundant light and frame treetop greenery, they provided decorating inspiration as well. "Black frames set into the thick white walls—that started a dialogue about contrasts," Mann explains. The concept informed the overall approach to the rooms, which go from light to dark and back again as one moves through the space.

The white elevator lobby is a bright spot—as well as the first hit of eccentricity. The tiny space is encrusted with convex plaster discs of varying sizes created and installed by Brooklyn-based artisan Stephen Antonson, a friend of Mann's and one of the many craftspeople the designer makes a point of establishing relationships with and then tapping for client projects. Antonson had been experimenting with the shapes in his studio when Mann paid a visit—and was inspired. "We had the idea to cover the whole ceiling in these forms and have



Previous spread, from left: In the living room of a New York apartment by MR Architecture + Decor, an untitled Morten Knudsen oil backdrops a Vladimir Kagan sofa. The entry's plaster forms are by artisan Stephen Antonson.

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Antonson also made the entry mirror's plaster shelf. In the foyer, Winter Stories #48, a photograph by Paolo Ventura, is paired with an ironwood console crafted by Jérôme Abel Seguin. The wall sculpture by Turiya Magadella is made of pantyhose; four moveable bronze forms compose the coffee table by Stéphane Parmentier.

Right: A tufted banquette anchors the living room's far end, near new casement windows chosen to approximate the original ones. **Bottom:** The library's ceiling fixture was designed by Serge Mouille; unframed works by Marilä Dardot hang above the sofa.

