Easton and Smith opened up the double-height space, which once included a library and a bedroom. Georges Braque's *Le Guéridon*, 1938, left, and *Ocean Park No. 9*, 1968, by Richard Diebenkorn are on the walls. The rug, from Beauvais, is a reproduction of a Portuguese carpet.

Manhattan Masterwork

A GRANDLY PROPORTIONED APARTMENT IS ARTFULLY REDONE

Architecture by Eric J. Smith, AIA/Interior Design by David Easton
Text by Wendy Moonan/Photography by Durston Saylor

"The basic premise of our design was to allow the art to make the impact in the spaces," David Easton says of a Manhattan penthouse he renovated with architect Eric J. Smith. OPPOSITE: *La Route*, 1875, by Paul Cézanne is above a French demilune console in the entrance hall. ABOVE: "Blue is the primary color in the living room because of the expansive view," says the designer. Fernand Léger's *Les Pistons*, 1918, hangs near a late-18th-century Italian fruitwood tall case clock. A 1942 bronze horse by Marino Marini is at left. Kravet drapery fabric.

"We had to gut it," New York designer David Easton explains, walking through a spectacular Manhattan penthouse. "It was a complete transformation."

The apartment, located in a landmark prewar building overlooking Central Park, has one of the most exclusive addresses in Manhattan. It was once owned by a philanthropist known for her support of classical music, who gave memorable postconcert parties there.

Easton's clients bought the apartment in 1995, after the philanthropist's death. The couple, who also have houses in Sun Valley, Idaho, and New Zealand, wanted to be able to welcome their children and grandchildren. They purchased an adjacent apartment so they could have three guest rooms. "We opened it all up," says Easton. The apartment now fills an entire floor, with a terrace the length of the living room on the front.

Easton and the architect, Eric J. Smith, completely reconfigured the space. They created an enfilade from the dining room, with its new cove ceiling, through the entrance hall to the living room. "We had to make the architecture logical," says Easton.

The interior design re-

OPPOSITE: The hand-painted chinoiserie wallcovering in the dining room "brings great excitement to the space," says Easton. A French Art Déco mirror is above the circa 1750 Irish Georgian console embellished with a carved mask. At right is a circa 1820 Chinese ivory pagoda.

BELOW: Easton relaxes in the living room. Picasso's *Femme Assise, Fond Rouge et Jaune*, 1952, and *Femme à la Résille*, 1938, are behind him.

ABOVE: The pine-paneled library "is cozy and accessible," notes the designer. *Tête de Femme*, 1943, by Picasso hangs over the sofa. Armand Guillaumin's *Epinay-sur-Orge*, circa 1884, is at right. A quill box tops the low table. The carpet is from Saxony.

volves around the clients' impressive art collection, which includes oils by Picasso, Cézanne, Braque, Léger, Guillaumin and Vlaminck. So Easton covered the walls of the entrance hall and the living room in a hand-troweled French plaster the color of parchment. "It's a quiet palette," he says. "I needed a background that was subtle enough for the paintings."

The centerpiece of the renovated apartment is a spacious living room with 20-foot-high ceilings. "When we started the project, the space was divided into a two-story living room, an additional bedroom and a library," explains the designer. "We returned the living room to its original scope."

Blue and beige predominate in the room. Easton specified beige draperies and sofas along with Chinese-blue cushions and club chairs. Nothing distracts from the huge Richard Diebenkorn painting, *Ocean Park No. 9*, or the three Picassos.

A magnificent custom-made blue-and-beige needlepoint carpet pulls the space together visually. "I always start with the rug," he says.

Since the clients entertain a lot, he organized the furniture into three separate arrangements to accommodate large numbers of guests. "I scat-

"The master bedroom, while large, faces north and east, so we chose a warm palette of coral, pink and salmon," explains Easton. A 19th-century painted low table and a two-arm button-tufted settee are by the fireplace. The drapery fabric is from Scalamandré.

BELOW: The terrace was rebuilt; it now extends the full length of the living room. "It has a sweeping view of Central Park and the Upper East Side," Smith points out. "The owners entertain a great deal, so we created an outdoor living space, with light, movable furniture."

Every room gets the designer's undivided attention. The master bedroom is a dream: The walls are glazed in a crisscross pattern; the carpet has a raised trellis motif.

ter the upholstery around," says Easton. His seating is very comfortable; the split-seat sofas, for example, are down-filled and covered with cream-colored chenille. The Louis XV and Louis XVI chairs are newly upholstered with soft fabrics. "I tried to make it elegant without being stuffy." The room houses an eclectic mix of pieces: a pair of Italian Neoclassical gilt mirrors with ram's heads, two matching Italian consoles with marble tops, a 19th-century English carved pine mantel, a Japanese low table and a circa 1780 Italian fruitwood tall case clock. Somehow, none of these lessen the impact of the Marini bronze horse or Braque's 1938 *Le Guéridon*.

In the entrance hall, which is marked by Cézanne's 1875 painting *La Route*, Easton installed a floor of white limestone with gray cabochons on which he placed a French demilune console and a gilt console with a marble top. Guests tend to linger in the space, which has an unobstructed view of the park.

In the dining room, Easton has hung a large French Art Déco mirror to reflect the flowers in the antiqued hand-painted chinoiserie wallcovering. It is a glamorous yet cozy room, with an 18th-century Irish Georgian console decorated with a carved mask. It is flanked by a pair of circa 1820 Chinese ivory pagodas. The English chinoiserie chairs, painted white, are, again, a mix of original 18th-century pieces and reproductions.

Easton and Smith turned an old kitchen pantry into a library. The designer paneled it in pine and put in a sturdy oak games table, a Chinese Chippendale mahogany chair and some comfortable upholstered pieces. Paintings by Armand Guillaumin and Picasso grace the walls.

The master bedroom is a dream in salmon, coral and pink. The walls are glazed in salmon in a crisscross pattern. The custom wool carpet is cream with a raised, overlaid coral trellis. The two-arm settee is button-tufted in pink cotton, and the draperies are pink and white. "The draperies have four layers," Easton notes. "There are two linings. One is a special fabric that blocks all the light; the other protects the silk. Together, they soften sound."

Every room gets the designer's undivided attention. Fish swim across the marble mosaic floor in the master bath; Easton had an ancient mosaic in Pompeii copied.

This penthouse may have been two years in the making, but it certainly fits the epigraph carved into the cornerstone of the building: "Dedicated to yesterday's charm and tomorrow's convenience." □