INTERIOR DESIGN DIAMOND BARATTA DESIGN ARCHITECTURE ERIC J. SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY PETER MARGONELLI
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PLAY THE BLUES

Modern art serves as muse in an 1880s townhouse revived by William Diamond and Anthony Baratta

modern family

The family room balances curvaceous white Brazilian chairs with kid-friendly "dirt" brown custom upholstery and leather ottoman/storage tables. The classic millwork of the fireplace surround is countered by a contemporary painting by Michael Kovner. The three-arm lamp is 1950s Italian.

IF THE INTERIOR SPACES OF THIS UPPER EAST SIDE TOWNHOUSE READ LIKE PAINTINGS, it's no accident. "You can walk into any room and know exactly where to focus," says William Diamond, just as one experiences a good piece of art. With sure strokes and clear hues, Diamond and design partner Anthony Baratta created crisp, intentional interiors for a four-story, double-wide Victorian that was reproportioned from top to bottom, front to back, and side to side by architect Eric J. Smith. To capitalize on the 1886 structure's unusually generous scale, its old layout, reimagined in the 1930s by classicist Edward Bottomley, begged opening up for a couple with four energetic boys.

Both Diamond and Baratta have art backgrounds: Diamond's undergraduate

This page, top: At the back of the house, the family room looks down on the garden. Southern light plays off the Gio Ponti chairs and table with reverse painted top, providing reading or games space. Left: Soft geometrics create pattern on pattern via custom textile treatments. Opposite, top: An unusual window profile is a Bottomley feature, now set off by the library's 20th-century French ceiling fixture. Chenille upholstery is positioned atop a custom rug. Opposite, bottom: In the kitchen's seating area, a Vladimir Kagan–inspired sofa shape and custom fabric is joined by a vintage table and chairs found in Buenos Aires. Lamp by David Weeks.

island brights

The kitchen cabinetry echoes the classic lines of the reworked mullions and moldings specified by Eric J. Smith throughout. The mahogany stools and chairs (inset) have childproof woven-vinyl seats. A pair of French 1940s lanterns illuminates the island, topped with blue-glazed lava stone.

A lever is lit up, figuratively, with a piece by Mark Rembold, found with Spencer Tomkins, who consulted on artwork throughout, and, literally, with a 1930s Jean Perzel ceiling fixture, retrofitted with blue glass. The Macassar ebony credenza is French Art Deco. Sconces, Charles Edwards. Rug from Tai Ping Carpets.

degree in painting is buttressed by Baratta's in art history. Their style is expressed in radiant color and clean forms. The family room, one of the hubs of the home, features a patterned carpet that recalls Jasper Johns' work (with deliberate absence of pigment integral to parts of it so the yarn "breathes," as did Johns' canvases), diamond-quilted upholstery inspired by Matisse's harlequin motifs, and square-within-square throw pillows that conjure Josef Albers' disciplined compositions.

Directly below the family room is the equally convivial, open kitchen, outfitted for cooking en famille, everyday dining and lounging about on an inviting organic sofa and lounge chairs—all interpreted in perfect sky blue accented with sunny orange. Elegant bay windows on both levels stretch the rooms out toward a spacious garden. A more decorous library wrapped in pine paneling is a nod to "grown-up" space. There's no need for a formal living room.

By the owners' request, blue is the order of the day, but the designers broke it up with gray suede cloth, warm wood tones, healthy doses of white and a few hot accents. Paralleling the artistic tension between colors is the play of contemporary against classic. Says Baratta, "I love it when a house retains a sense of tradition and then we come in and fuse a very modern look to it." ~ *See Resources.*

CONTINUED

ship shape

A powder-coated spiral staircase by the Old Steel Shoppe leads from the fourth-floor children's bedrooms to their rooftop play area, making a graphic statement against reflective, reverse-painted glass walls by Stanley Schoen. The porthole lights are shiny chrome.

mastering whimsy

Polly Apfelbaum's *Love Street #5* gives the master bedroom a riveting focal point. The bed's sewn-wool squares dimple in sync with the wall fabric, from Pollack. Night tables and bed are of cerused oak. Flowers carried over into the seating area (inset) are Warhol-inspired. "Draper" carpet from the Diamond Baratta Collection at Stark.