

GREAT RENOVATIONS!

Town & Country

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**SPECIAL
HOME
ISSUE**

**KATHARINE
HEPBURN'S
ESTATE**

**T&C'S NEW
PENTHOUSE
SUITE**

**THE
ULTIMATE
KITCHEN**

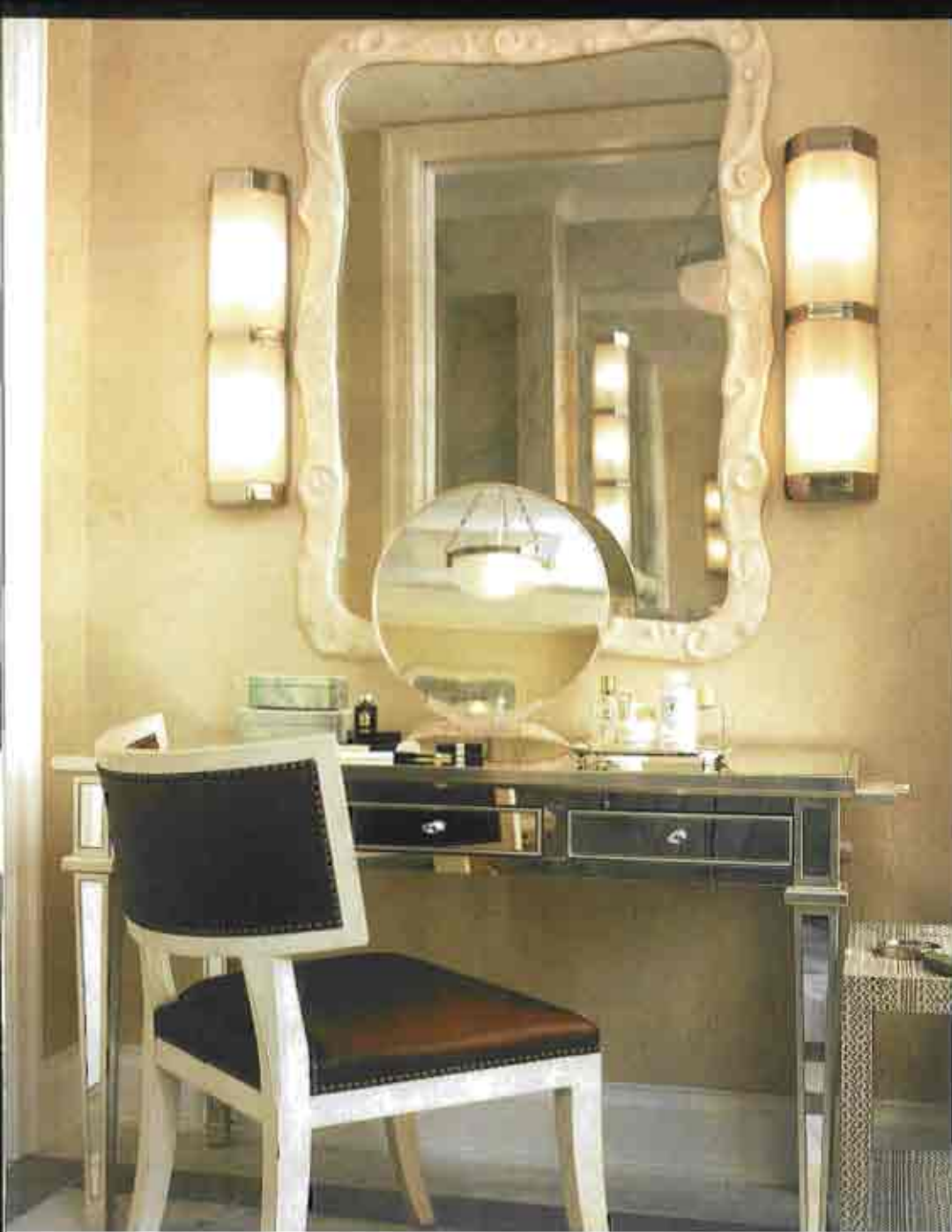
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The *T&C* Suite
at the Lowell Hotel



... this... a hotel? The Lowell's newly renovated penthouse breaks the mold with hand-painted silk wallpaper from de Gournay, Nancy Koltes linens and a custom canopy bed. Opposite: A breakfast tray greets guests in the entry hall, which is painted William Green and Wash Basin White from Ralph Lauren Paint. The curtain fabric is Masquerade from Cowtan & Tout. For shopping information on furnishings and fashion, see page 240.



owners, the conceptual input of his team, which included Brian Covington, Michael Simeone, Andrea Trietsch and Matthew Winter, was invaluable.

A renovation ten years ago had given the 2,200-square-foot penthouse and its three small terraces a pleasing layout. The entertaining areas—kitchen, dining room and living room—are accessible from the front hall, while the master bedroom, its dressing room and its bath are tucked into the suite's southwest corner, with two additional bedrooms and baths nearby. These come in handy when guests are traveling with children—or when they want a private gym or a piano moved in or have some extra clothes on rolling racks.

Smith understood the shortcomings of the penthouse and could forecast its potential charm. Inspired by the hotel's Manhattan personality—more Nora Charles than Nora Ephron—he started building a story for the suite the way he would have for any client, keeping in mind that the results would have to play well in front of a large audience, provide the succor essential in a grand hotel space and stand up to hard use.

"Hotel rooms need to be more flexible and durable than residential rooms," says the designer. "You have to think about providing more storage. You have to think about protecting the walls from

Smith says. "There are fireplaces in almost every room, and the service is impeccable." The idea of another New York job also had its appeal. "I love working in the city, though it's much harder than working in L.A.," he admits. "When you're installing a room here, for example, you can't just step back out of a window and stack your boxes on the lawn—everyone is sort of on top of each other in a hallway. It's very difficult logistically. But I do like it. The resources are always great; the craftspeople are always amazing." Not to mention that one of Smith's favorite collaborators—Oscar Shamamian of Ferguson & Shamamian Architects, LLP, one of the country's top interpreters of classical building styles—is based in downtown Manhattan. Although Shamamian's involvement at the Lowell was advisory, and the final work reflects the hands-on participation of the

scratches and marking, which you do by putting furniture in front of them. Bedroom closets need to be big enough to hold safes. Bedside tables should absolutely not have little drawers in them—people just leave things there and forget about them when they check out."

Given the tight time frame of about five months for design and renovation (the latter took ten weeks), Smith and the T&C team had to work sequentially, first plotting out the kitchen and baths, areas with the longest lead times. Bathrooms are a personal favorite of Smith's, so much so that he has already designed collections of tile for Ann Sacks and fixtures, hardware and lighting for Kallista. Hotel bathrooms, with their generous size and whiz-bang features, have contributed to the recent revolution in home ablution; Smith enjoyed the irony of improving the Lowell's

Our Design Showhouse

PENTHOUSE SERENADE

At Manhattan's chic Lowell hotel, *Town & Country* and designer Michael S. Smith hit a high note as they give the top-floor suite a glamorous update.

Written and produced by Sarah Medford

Photographs by Brian Doben

HAIR BY PATRICK MERVILLE AT WARREN TRICOMI FOR REDKEN. MAKEUP BY REBECCA RESTREPO AT THE WALL GROUP. USING STILA COSMETICS. PROPS STYLED BY EDZARIFIN DAWI.



Is this... a hotel? The Lowell's newly renovated penthouse breaks the mold with hand-painted silk wallpaper from de Gournay, Nancy Koltès linens and a custom canopy bed. Opposite: A breakfast tray greets guests in the entry hall, which is painted Allium Green and Wash Basin White from Ralph Lauren Paint. The curtain fabric is Masquerade from Cowtan & Tout. For shopping information on furnishings and fashion, see page 240.

Smith added limestone floors from Ann Sacks and a built-in cabinet to the suite's glass-walled dining area, evoking the atmosphere of a French conservatory. The mirrored glass table, from Jean de Merry, in Los Angeles, holds Christofle silver, William Yeoward glassware, Tiffany china and E. Braun linen napkins. The chairs are from Sentimento. Opposite, from top: A James Nares painting, courtesy of the Paul Kasmin Gallery, over a desk from Geraid Bland Antiques; Lowell co-owner Dina Chartouni and Michael S. Smith.



mindful of maintaining its European élan as well as its private character (for more on the hotel, see page 204). That said, Fouad and Dina Chartouni had lived in the penthouse for seven years while redoing a town house, so they knew exactly what it lacked. The couple saw renovation as an enormous opportunity.

"In the past ten years, there have been so many changes in technology that have affected hotel design," says Dina Chartouni. "With flat-screen TVs, for example, we don't need those bulky armoires in every room anymore. We're using more indirect light from the ceiling and wall-mounted fixtures. And anybody who's interested in music has an iPod, so they want a dock, rather than a stereo, and they want it right by the bed." Other changes the couple hoped to make were more stylistic, loosening up the toast-rack-and-tea-sandwiches look of the space.

With T&C's blessing, the Chartounis hired Michael S. Smith, a designer who "gives classicism a modern edge," as Dina puts it, for clients including Steven Spielberg and Kate Capshaw, Evelyn and Lynn de Rothschild and Rupert and Wendi Murdoch. They'd known Smith for almost a decade and admired the work he'd done in the guest rooms at Shutters, the Santa Monica, California, beach hotel. Though based in L.A., the designer is taking on more projects in New York these days, including sizable jobs for clients old and new; he is a regular guest at the Lowell.

"Staying at the Lowell is like staying in a town house,"

Michael S. Smith's Rules of Renovation

1. If you can, live in the space first. People tend to overrenovate when they don't.
2. Find a contractor you genuinely like. Renovation is a hard process, in some ways like a marriage. Start out with a partner you respect.
3. You get what you pay for. Never go with the cheapest contractor or make your builder choose the cheapest subcontractor. That creates a very weak pyramid, with your contractor on top, precariously holding your job in his hands.
4. Spend ample time on the plans before demolition. Let all the voices be heard—architect, designer, contractor, landscape designer. Your project will be much stronger for it and run more smoothly.
5. When you start your renovation, make sure to finish it. If you don't get to something when the walls are open and the dust is flying, you never will.



Breakfast wouldn't be the only meal you'd want to take in bed in this room, whose starting point—and masterstroke—is wallpaper by de Gournay, painted in the style of a Japanese screen. In the far corner is an armchair from Nancy Corzine; a Sony flat-screen TV is just out of sight on the right. The curtains are of Kansu silk by Larsen. Opposite: Tranquil moment, tranquil room.





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Smith used his own For Town line of bath fixtures, designed for Kallista a few years ago, to set the glamorous tone he wanted in the master bath. Ann Sacks's Selena honed marble appears on the vanity top, walls and floors; the alabaster Bowl light is from Vaughan; and the Berling sconces here and in the dressing room (opposite) are from Ralph Lauren Home. Also in the dressing room: Nancy Corzine's Versailles mirrored glass desk; a Muse telephone table from Profiles; a Serge wall mirror from Dessin Fournir; and a vanity mirror and painted chair from John Rosselli & Associates.