

ROOMS TO INSPIRE IN THE CITY

STYLISH INTERIORS FOR
URBAN LIVING



RIZZOLI
NEW YORK

ANNIE KELLY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
TIM STREET-PORTER

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LEFT: Peter Dunham and Peter Kopelson's dogs wait for a walk at the back door of their West Hollywood bungalow.

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*Anybody can be good in the country.
There are no temptations there.*

—Oscar Wilde
The Picture of Dorian Gray

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PREVIOUS SPREAD: *The ornate exterior of the nineteenth-century Ansonia building on New York’s Upper West Side.* RIGHT: *The London drawing room of antiquarian Peter Himwood.*





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LEFT: Peter Dunham and Peter Kopelson's dogs wait for a walk at the back door of their West Hollywood bungalow.

THE INFINITE POSSIBILITIES FOR DESIGNING CITY ROOMS

WHAT INSPIRED THE DESIGN of these city apartments and small houses? It was perhaps the pleasurable challenge of making them visually as well as physically comfortable in order to provide a retreat—a place to step back from the outside world. After all, this is important in many urban areas, which are out of control, bustling with relentless traffic and unchecked development. Often the only part of the city that can be tamed is behind the front door. Here, we show a selection of ideas from the most creative people in the decorating world, who have designed their own city homes, as well as homes of their friends and clients.

In each of the previous *Rooms to Inspire* books we began with the work of one of today's most influential decorators, the late Tony Duquette. We couldn't resist showing how he stopped at nothing to bring an exotic richness to Dodie Rosekrans's Parisian pied-à-terre. Duquette shopped in India to create a pure fantasy, down to dramatic leopard-skin awnings decorating the exterior of the building.

The celebrated turn-of-the-last-century Dakota apartment building on Central Park West is among the finest living spaces that New York had to offer at the time. Finished in 1884, it has breathtakingly grand proportions, an open interior courtyard on the scale of the plaza of a small European town, and came with all sorts of modern conveniences, even a gym. Today, it is still one of the city's most desirable buildings, and we show a small ground-floor apartment with grand style and proportions,

recently decorated by Muriel Brandolini, who can make even a modest-size space look luxurious. Perhaps inspired by David Hicks's famous set in London's Albany, Brandolini also added moments of drama, like a draped four-poster bed right in the middle of where most people would expect a living room.

Another stately nineteenth-century New York building is the Ansonia. Inspired by French Beaux Arts architecture of the time, it was built as a residential hotel that included its own air-conditioning. Designer John Hardy and his wife Cynthia fell in love with its turrets and lavish interior architectural detailing. They bought a corner apartment to serve as a pied-à-terre on visits from their home in Bali. My favorite space is their Javanese bathroom, built with slatted wood that is lit from behind to look like sunlight streaming through the boards, with a shower that descends through the slats like a burst of rain. Zang Toi's Upper East Side apartment was also French-inspired, but was built as part of a grand town house with fine nineteenth-century proportions. During the same period, decorator Robert Couturier's building was constructed as office space downtown in SoHo. Not much has changed in a hundred years as he runs his business here, using a small apartment, tucked into one of its floors, as a garçonnière.

Some cities are more suburban in character, and these homes offer more space, as well as greater out-

Like the Chateau Marmont and the Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles, our house in the Hollywood Hills is an example of 1920s Hollywood fantasy architecture.



Villa
Vallombrosa
2074

door areas. Los Angeles is a classic twentieth-century city of this type, where many people's houses have gardens large enough to re-create the atmosphere of a small resort. Here, decorator Peter Dunham and his partner Peter Kopelson make use of both the indoors and outdoors around a small swimming pool. Mary McDonald converted her previous home in the Hollywood Hills into a guesthouse when she moved to Brentwood. In a Hollywood Regency Revival style, it was too beautiful to part with when she moved. Suburbia is worldwide: Designer Jaya Ibrahim lives in a single-floor Jakarta house, where he also maintains an office. The central courtyard includes a spa-like open bathroom—an enviable luxury in the tropics.

Most of the designers in this book have a considered relationship with the architecture of their homes. Even Duquette created a logical “backstory” for his place in San Francisco’s Cow Hollow, imagining it to be the house of a ship’s captain who had traveled the Orient, bringing back spoils from China and Thailand to furnish his home. Successful decorating generally follows the original architectural intent of the property, even if there is a certain amount of poetic license involved. However, some apartments can be like blank canvases for a personal story. For example, Muriel Brandolini gave Eric Hadar’s modern penthouse in New York an Asian flavor. After high school, Hadar had spent a year traveling through the Orient, and today he is always happy to come home from work to a place that reminds him of his footloose and fancy-free youth.

THE ART OF INDIVIDUAL STYLE

Just as clothing reflects our personality and taste, our homes tell other people who we are. Even if we have brought in someone else to help us, how we decorate our home establishes a personal context

combining where we live with our cultural enthusiasms and interests. Even changing one room in an apartment can be exciting, like turning over a new leaf. It gives a feeling of rebirth and a sense of countless new possibilities. To some extent, we all wear our houses like a turtle wears its shell, and a successful interior can be a reflection of ourselves—redo a room to become a different person. Designer Jonathan Adler recommends redecorating as his “prescription for anti-depressive living,” as you can see here in the cheery Manhattan apartment he did for the Wagman family.

How can we create our own personal style? The good news is that there has never been so much raw material available, thanks to globalization and China’s industrious factories. The design industry now caters to everyone, with both high and low versions of almost everything, from fabrics to furnishings of every sort. With the influx of affordable style in stores such as Pottery Barn, Ikea, and Target, good design is available for everyone.

Although their number is shrinking as a result of today’s risky dependence on advertising, magazines show what is out there and how to put interiors together. Bloggers such as [peakofchic.com](#), [stylecourt.com](#), and [rivieraview.com](#) are stepping in to fill the creative void left by the demise of much loved publications like *Domino* and *House & Garden*. Magazines have also been hurt by the Internet, although many of the design blogs promote them by mentioning their favorite decorating stories every month. Some of the best blogs are as informative as picking up your favorite design magazine. What makes a good decorating blog? Daily postings cover a wide variety of finds and inspirations, written about with enthusiasm and passion that both entertain and educate. Unlike many of today’s remaining shelter magazines, they aren’t afraid to have a point of view.

Planned as an Italian-style piano nobile, our main living room is on the first floor. French and Italian eighteenth- and nineteenth-century furniture continues the illusion of a house in Europe.



Furniture from past eras is there for anyone who is prepared to search. The website 1stdibs.com offers page after page of great twentieth-century furniture, both mass-produced pieces like the designs of Charles Eames, or more rarified items like those of Jean-Michel Frank. Stores across America specialize in furniture from every period, and in most cities you can find a design district to provide hours of happy browsing.

Today's most obvious trend is to combine styles and periods to arrive at a personal synthesis of inspirations. Much like the decorating of the 1960s and seventies, many people are pairing modern furniture with period styles. However, we shouldn't forget that "modern" has been fashionable for almost ninety years, so by now there is a lot of room for experimentation. The current international trend seems to be large open spaces, sparsely furnished with perfectly tailored sofas, luxurious rugs, and a collection of contemporary art that varies from country to country. Today there is a Jeff Koons in every elegant living room—who knows who tomorrow's artist will be?

However, some people prefer a more cozy version of historicism. Ralph Lauren has mastered the style of the comfortable rich, with the illusion of an ancestral past. No one else has influenced how we dress and live as much as this quintessential designer who has identified various lifestyles, packed them up, and sold these utopian visions back to us. Decorators like Bunny Williams have been enormously influential across America, thanks to her best-selling books. Even if you find this decorating style conservative, her advice holds true no matter what style of apartment you have. Good decorating is an art, and the same principles apply before you begin to decide on color and style.

The work of early- and mid-century modern furniture designers has never been more popular,

and many of them have been well documented in several recent books. Look out for *Paul Frankl*, by Christopher Long; *Class Act: William Haines*, by Peter Schifando and Jean Mathison; *Gio Ponti*, edited by Ugo La Pietra; and *Jean-Michel Frank*, by Pierre-Emmanuel Martin-Vivier. You can also find inspiration in other decorators' books that show their own urban interiors put together with great verve and skill. Apart from those that we show here, another big influence today is the spare and refined work of Belgian designer and collector Axel Vervoordt. He is a connoisseur of old and beautiful objects, which he mixes with the modern lines of contemporary art and design. Vervoordt has the eye of an artist and is an inspiration to many as an interior designer, collector, and dealer on a grand scale.

Abrasive as it is, why are we so attracted to big city living? People have always been drawn by the city's irresistible siren call of culture, trade, and society, including many of America's most successful designers, who make all sorts of compromises and often sacrifice space to live this way. Sadly, in New York, where maintaining whole town houses was once the norm, many today are usually carved up into small apartments. But there are always ways to add the illusion of extra space into these homes as we can see in today's town house balconies, the backyards of ivy-covered brownstones, and views of urban parks. In the more suburban cities, especially in warmer climates, the transition between indoors and outdoors is very important, and a well-furnished garden can expand the living space of the house.

Each of the rooms in this book has an element of design and decoration that we find inspiring. We hope you enjoy these ideas as much as we do. Above all, one of the greatest luxuries in the world is the peace and calm in one's own home.

A pair of Garouste and Bonetti bronze sconces flank an ancestral painting from Martyn Lawrence-Bullard in the living room. The draped table is an excellent place for authors like us to store magazine reference material underneath. FOLLOWING SPREAD: The city of Los Angeles spreads out from a view high in the Hollywood Hills.

