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A TINY 170-YEAR-OLD TOWNHOUSE GETS A 21ST-CENTURY MAKEOVER

INTERIOR DESIGN **CHRISTINA ROUGHAN** · ARCHITECTURE **HIRSCH|CORTI ARCHITECTURE**
BY **JORGE S. ARANGO** · PHOTOGRAPHY **NICK GUTTRIDGE**



WHEN A SEA captain built a trio of brick townhouses for his three daughters in 1840s Greenwich Village, he made the middle residence—to be occupied by his favorite—three inches wider. It was a small token of affection, but when you're talking about a mere 2,600-square-foot spread amongst three floors, every inch counts. And it paid off for the home's modern-day fiftysomething owners.

In spite of the home's rundown condition, the clients fell in love with the back garden. So they called architects Roger Hirsch and Myriam Corti and designer Christina Roughan, who had done previous projects for them. "We wanted to keep the integrity of the space, which is landmarked," explains Roughan, "but create a more modern feel." *CONTINUED ▶*

OPEN NATURE *LEFT:* Hirsch|Corti Architecture restored the 1840s façade. *OPPOSITE:* But they blew out the back wall, fitting it with a modern glass plate by Empire Architectural Glass that made the living room feel part of the garden. The custom fireplace, fabricated by Think Construction, doesn't obstruct the view from the front room.



GARDEN ROOM Curvaceous Vladimir Kagan lounge chairs from Ralph Pucci contrast with the boxier shapes of a B&B Italia sofa in Corragio fabric and a bespoke 1930s French-style daybed by designer Christina Roughan, who accessorized the room with Charles Hollis Jones Lucite occasional tables, a glass-topped vintage coffee table base, and Paul Evans lamps from Lobel Modern.

“It was all about the garden and bringing light into the house.”
– Architect Roger Hirsch



Typical of the era, floors were divided into small rooms. “The disadvantage of townhouses,” observes Corti, “is you’re in one or another space unless you find a way to open it up and make the spaces flow.” Which is exactly what they did, moving the kitchen to the front of the house from the back and removing walls so light could pass freely from one end of the floors to the other.

Then the architects convinced the city’s Landmarks Preservation Commission to let them replace the entire first-floor back façade with a 15-by-10-foot plate glass wall that had to be craned over the row houses and lowered behind them. “We detailed the glass so there is no frame, so it doesn’t feel like a window,” Hirsch says. “You feel like you’re in the garden.” *CONTINUED ►*

GREEN LIGHT *OPPOSITE:* Cassina’s Caprice chairs encircle the dining area’s Hudson Furniture table. The Serge Mouille reissue fixture (from Gueridon) also illuminates a David Remfry triptych. *ABOVE TOP:* A Richard Hambleton artwork at the top of the stairs. *ABOVE:* Green Ann Sacks glass tile, Corian counters, and white lacquer cabinetry in the kitchen.



MEMORABLE PASSAGE OPPOSITE: An Environment Furniture dresser made of reclaimed beams, Donghia mohair velvet window seat, and a leather Ralph Lauren Home chair add rich textures to the office. ABOVE: The architects designed the bronze-tinted glass wall and walnut stairs. LEFT: Glazing Vision's custom skylight is an homage to James Turrell, appearing as an aperture to the sky.

Respecting the 19th-century origins, the team preserved the brick west wall from first to top floors and installed new wide-plank wood floors that look original to the house. The stairwell culminates in a skylight, bringing in still more light. For the interior envelope, says Roughan,

“We looked at the outside and windows as artworks themselves. So we kept a neutral palette of ivory tinted with grayish-purple so you could enjoy how the garden changes through the seasons.” Furnishings are clean-lined classics (Vladimir Kagan chairs, a Charles Hollis Jones *CONTINUED* ▶



WHITE OUT LEFT, TOP AND BOTTOM: The all-white master bedroom is punctuated by a custom Wired light fixture inspired by Lobmyer's Metropolitan Opera chandeliers above a BDDW "Hollywood" bed dressed in Matouk linens. ABOVE: An Osborne & Little wallcovering adds subtle lilac to the guestroom. OPPOSITE: The master bath features an Apal "Ovo" tub and Dornbracht's Mem tub filler.

cigarette table, Paul Evans lamps) paired with custom pieces (a day-bed inspired by Jean-Michel Frank) and contemporary silhouettes (a B&B Italia sofa, a Hudson Furniture American black walnut table surrounded by Philippe Starck's chairs).

"It's a very compact house," concedes Corti. "But when you're there, it feels spacious." And who knows? Perhaps the captain's two other daughters never measured the widths of each house and, so, remained none the wiser. **SEE RESOURCES ■**