

REVERSE MIGRATION

DESIGNER MICHELE BITTER
HELPS LONGTIME CLIENTS MAKE
A SEAMLESS MOVE FROM AN
OUTER BOROUGH TO
CITY CENTER

INTERIOR DESIGN MICHELE BITTER · TEXT JORGE S. ARANGO
PHOTOGRAPHY MARK ROSKAMS

FLIP SIDES Complementary designs of two Fort Street Studio rugs help define the living and family rooms on either side of the fireplace while also unifying their aesthetics. A Vladimir Kagan sofa from Ralph Pucci, Gio Ponti tables from Reform Modern, and vintage Folke Ohlsson chairs found in Paris add midcentury cool.



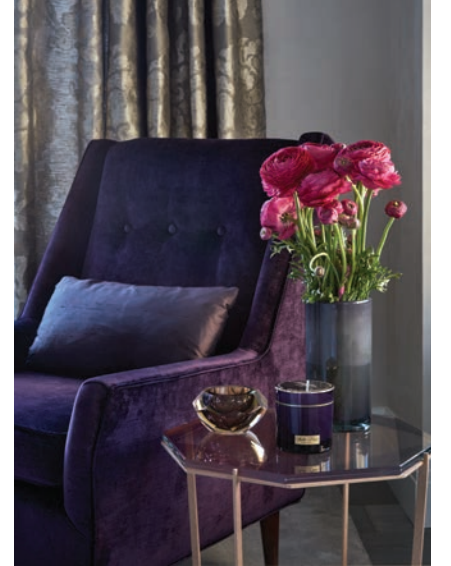
CULINARY ARTS *LEFT:* The kitchen is ringed in Caesarstone counters and outfitted with a Sub-Zero refrigerator, Miele ovens and dishwasher, Gaggenau range, and a U-Line undercounter wine fridge, all from Gringer & Sons. Vintage barstools were repurposed from their former home, but upholstered in a mustard yellow, a favorite color of the wife's. Under pendants from Niche Modern sits a Trice dining table from Holly Hunt surrounded by suede-upholstered vintage Kagan chairs from Ralph Pucci.

IT'S COMMON THESE days for empty nesters to return to urban centers after the kids have left home. But the couple that owns this apartment had no choice but to do this in their early forties after their son was accepted to a private Manhattan school. With a daughter also to consider and a third child on the way, they sold their Brooklyn Heights home and purchased two apartments on Riverside Drive, then tasked their designer, Michele Bitter, with combining them to make their re-entry into city life smooth.

"They wanted it as open as possible and for each child to have their own room," recalls Bitter. The Hudson River-facing side of the resulting 2,500-square-foot L-shaped space lent itself to a loft-like room with a kitchen at one end followed by dining, living and family room areas. Bitter sheathed walls in pale gray, "a neutral palette without being austere," she notes, "that could be a backdrop for the art." **CONTINUED** ▶



COZY CORNERS *OPPOSITE:* The breakfast nook exudes hip comfort with a Saarinen-style table from LexMod and chairs from DWR. Overhead hangs a vintage Murano fixture. *RIGHT:* A master bedroom vignette includes a vintage chair in Robert Allen velvet and Debra Folz's side table (ABC Carpet & Home) set against silk Donghia drapes. *BELOW LEFT:* A Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams bed upholstered in custom linens from Casa Del Bianco, Bungalow 5 side table, and Phillip Jeffries suede walls. *BELOW RIGHT:* The girl's room, wrapped in another Jeffries wallcovering and a Designer's Guild paper on the ceiling, features a Stark carpet.



"We created design elements where structural columns were immovable," remembers Bitter, who used one steel support, now encased in a square white column, to define the boundary of the kitchen, and hid others in a two-sided polished travertine fireplace that now separates living and family rooms. Private quarters fill the other "L" section. These include the serene, suede-enveloped master suite ("They both work and are incredibly busy," says Bitter, "so they needed a tranquil retreat."), succeeded by the older children's bedrooms, which share a bath, and a fourth bedroom.

A fairly elaborate mosaic floor in the children's bath "might seem fancy for kids," admits Bitter. "But this is also the guest bathroom when they entertain. The periwinkle glass tile derives from a combination of the girl's room's lilac palette and the boy's blue room. It's masculine and feminine, so it works for both." The black-and-white master bath, by contrast, evokes "an old Park Avenue, very traditional feel," with its hexagonal tile mosaic floor and subway **CONTINUED ▶**



ALL WASHED UP ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: In the master bath, subway tile, a Studium mosaic, a custom oil-rubbed bronze vanity, and Waterworks nickel faucets impart a 1920s New York feel that designer Michele Bitter contemporized with Polaris sconces from Arteriors. Another Studium mosaic adds sophistication to the blue-glass-tiled kids' bath, which also features a Duravit double sink, Circa Lighting sconces, and another custom vanity. The laundry room-mudroom features a cheery Smeg refrigerator and Miele washer and dryer.

wall tile, “but details like modern lighting make it more contemporary,” she explains.

There is also a laundry-mudroom outfitted with a bright green Smeg refrigerator that holds special items for the son, who has various allergies. The kitchen houses the communal refrigerator, which disappears into custom-designed cabinetry in high-gloss white, their starkness mitigated by gray-washed wide-plank wood floors.

Organic textures like the floor—and grasscloth, supple fabrics, silky rugs—“have a nice hand to them,” says Bitter, “making everything feel warm and comforting.”

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