

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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Designers' Own Homes SIGNATURE STYLE



**SPRING
PREVIEW:**
The Season's
Best in
Culture,
Travel, and
Shopping

**AD'S
RENOVATION
ESSENTIALS**

PARTNERS IN STYLE

Writer Brad Goldfarb has learned a thing or two from living with Alfredo Paredes, an interior-design force at Ralph Lauren. The couple's New York City apartment is a testament to their creative synergy

TEXT BY BRAD GOLDFARB PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIGUEL FLORES-VIANNA PRODUCED BY ROBERT RUFINO

WHEN YOU LIVE WITH A GIFTED DESIGNER, AS I have for close to 25 years, it makes sense to defer to the expert on matters of nest building. In my case that expert is Alfredo Paredes, one of Ralph Lauren's long-standing protégés and the man charged with guiding the creation of the company's famously evocative environments—which translates into everything from store design to product presentation. In each of the five apartments Alfredo and I have shared, I've tended to let him take the reins, while at the same time voicing my domestic wishes (a functional kitchen, ample bookshelves, and upholstery that by virtue of its color and material will withstand *The New York Times*, to name a few).

I was reminded of this dynamic a few years ago, when a broker introduced us to the East Village duplex we now call home. You didn't have to be a top-notch designer to know there was something special about the 2,500-square-foot penthouse, which had abundant natural light, high ceilings, and a large terrace—all features our then-home in Tribeca lacked. Nevertheless, I had

concerns. Having been cobbled together over time, the rooms needed serious work. (The building was originally a hospital in the 1920s and later became a music school before the top three floors were converted into residences.) Alfredo, however, had seen our future, and we were standing in it. "This place is amazing," he whispered. After a year of looking at listings all over downtown Manhattan, it was a reaction I'd all but given up on hearing. A few months later the apartment was ours.

Still, he acknowledged that the renovation wouldn't be easy. The key, we knew, would be transforming the existing '80s aesthetic into something warmer and more timeless. Alfredo imagined the space as an artist's garret. But it also evoked the romantic mood and spirit of '20s California architecture—buildings like the Chateau Marmont in West Hollywood, with its stone floors and Gothic arches. Achieving a delicate mix of both would mean making a number of big changes.

To help us arrive at our envisioned end point, Alfredo and I turned to New York-based architect Michael Neumann and his

Writer Brad Goldfarb and Alfredo Paredes—executive vice president and chief retail creative officer at Ralph Lauren—collaborated with architect Michael Neumann on the renovation of their Manhattan duplex. They added double doors with arched transoms and a timber ceiling to the living/dining area, which features a table by Lucca Antiques, a suite of vintage Tolix chairs, and a Spanish wrought-iron lantern. The vase is by Ralph Lauren Home, the candelabra are flea-market finds, and the framed photograph is by Richard Phibbs. For details see Sources.





A large-scale work on paper by Richard Serra is given pride of place in the living area, where an LG flat-screen television is mounted on an artist's easel. A pair of Ralph Lauren Home club chairs and a vintage horn stool are grouped with a cocktail table by Lucca Antiques.



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project manager, Jairo (Jay) Camelo, with whom we’d collaborated closely on our previous apartment. Michael recalls that for both him and Jay what made the duplex so interesting to work on is the way it rambles. “The upstairs doesn’t sit directly above the downstairs,” he notes, “and there are windows on all four sides, so it feels like a house.” That said, it clearly needed some architectural gestures on a grand scale.

Blowing out the single terrace door and four flanking windows on the lower level and replacing them with five arched openings was the obvious place to start. Trickier was finding a way to fashion a more dramatic entrance to the apartment—something we ultimately resolved by shifting the position of the stair, making way for a small foyer and subsequent hall before you enter the living/dining area. Upstairs, meanwhile, we converted what had been three bedrooms with modest adjoining baths into one master suite, complete with a dressing area, and a study where I could write (scratch one more thing off my wish list).

I know from having worked alongside Alfredo on various renovations that he loves to create contrast by taking something old and introducing contemporary elements. Doing so here required adding some patina first, a strategy I immediately embraced. A quantity of natural white oak was called into play—for paneling, built-in bookcases, and cabinetry—as were raw plaster for the walls, reclaimed wood for the ceilings, and French limestone tiles for the flooring, all of which lend the interiors a sense of age renewed. When it came to the furnishings, we went in search of pieces that had an air of history but that, by dint of their scale, shape, or stripped-down quality, would feel modern. A muscular stone-top console commands the length of one wall in the dining area, while a large circular table made from reclaimed chestnut anchors the space. Alfredo and I frequently eat at home (I’m an avid cook and recently launched a cooking website, the Recipe Grinder), but rather than clutter the table with seating when it’s just



Left, from top: Industrial light fixtures and bluestone countertops complement white-oak cabinetry in the kitchen; the pulls are by E.R. Butler. A painting by Pat Steir hangs above the dining area’s vintage Belgian console table. **Opposite:** Sid, the couple’s Labrador retriever, dozes in the living area; the sofa is by Ralph Lauren Home, the black ceramic vase is by JF Chen, and the floor lamp is vintage.



The expansive terrace has been divided into several seating vignettes; the teak sofa, armchairs, and cocktail table are all from Jalan Jalan Collection, and the cushions and pillows are covered in Ralph Lauren Home fabrics. **Opposite, from top:** The apartment overlooks a historic church. The zinc-top dining table is by Lucca Antiques.





the two of us, the dozen vintage Tolix chairs on the terrace are simply pulled inside as needed. Flexibility is something we strived for throughout the apartment, whether by perching the television on an antique easel (allowing the screen to pivot), commissioning a daybed for the study that would enable it to double as a guest room, or stashing clothes behind closet doors so our dressing area could also function as a serene work space for Alfredo.

In fact *serene* could well be the overriding mood of the apartment, which—perfect though it may be for entertaining—is an ideal place for powering down. No spot better serves that purpose than our bedroom, where three of the walls are lined with thick linen curtains that, when closed, block both sound and light. Alfredo wanted a setting that would envelop us the way a dark hotel room does, and that’s exactly what we got. Which just might explain why two guys like us, who were always on our way out the door, now never want to leave home. □

Clockwise from top left: The master bath’s sink fittings are by Lefroy Brooks. Sconces and a tub by Urban Archaeology and a branch sculpture from Wyeth in the same space. A framed nude by Phibbs is displayed in the dressing area. **Opposite, clockwise from top:** The couple chose fabrics by Ralph Lauren Home for their bedroom’s curtains and headboard; the lamps and African stool are vintage. The daybed in the study is clad in leather and silk velvet, both by Ralph Lauren Home. Sid is seated before the study’s armoire, which was adapted for use as a desk.



CLEMENT

superb steel windows