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PERFECTLY PIED-A-TERRE

FOR MOST SECOND HOME BUYERS, THE CONVENTIONAL wisdom is to purchase property in close proximity to their main residence. A short, hassle-free commute is usually a prime prerequisite for frequent weekend use. However, some adventurous souls decide to venture further afield and set up house in distant locales. Aside from the obvious advantage of amassing frequent-flyer miles, owning real estate in a foreign

country is a complex proposition with numerous pleasures and almost as many pitfalls.

A South American couple who travels to New York at least once a month located an ideal family pied-a-terre in the Big

In the family's library/media room, Ernest de la Torre framed a sumptuous wall of saddle leather with two custom bookcases.



Left: A newly acquired Robert Rauschenberg painting is the major focal point for de la Torre's sleekly designed living room.

Below left: Visitors are greeted by a dramatic James Nares painting in the apartment's foyer.

Apple. Interior designer Ronald Bricke set his sights on the City of Light, and found Gallic bliss as a part-time resident of Paris, France. How these individuals coped with cultural differences and learned to live out their dreams in two of the world's most sophisticated cities may inspire others to follow their lead.

NEW YORK / ERNEST DE LA TORRE

When Ernest de la Torre was commissioned to design an apartment for a South American couple and their two teenage children, the major directive was to create a contemporary interior without sacrificing a feeling of warmth. He fulfilled the goal by employing a sensuous mélange of cashmere, chenille, suede, leather, and exotic woods throughout the 3,000-square-foot space.

Along with architect Thomas Goryeb, de la Torre took the space, a new construction on the West Side (adjacent to the burgeoning Columbus Circle neighborhood) and

completely reconfigured it. The duo created an impressive entrance hallway with the application of Santos Rosewood to the wall and door surfaces. De la Torre's creative solution for fabricating the elegant, nickel-plated metal doorframe was to have it crafted in the unlikely confines of an auto body repair shop. To expand the space for entertaining, the designer converted the third bedroom into a library/media room, which opens up directly into the living room.

De la Torre custom-designed most of the furniture, with the exception of a Christian Liaigre coffee table and French Leleu desk. The dark wood floors are stained with ebony, and contrasted with white Flokati carpets. Walls are wrapped in natural raffia. "The texture offsets the smooth, contemporary surfaces," says de la Torre. To create a sumptuous, serene master bedroom, he framed the headboard and adjoining wall in soft, chocolate brown suede.

The clients took a hands-on approach in selecting the artwork for the apartment. Avid collectors, they scouted the New York galleries with de la Torre. As a graduate of the Decorative and Fine Arts program at Sotheby's Institute of Art in London, de la Torre has extensive knowledge and training as a curator. With the designer's guidance, his clients made two major purchases: the James Nares painting in the foyer, and a Robert Rauschenberg canvas, which became the living room's focal point. Additional selections include an Antoine Ponce





sculpture and a collection of Han Dynasty Chinese pottery.

The owners placed enormous trust in de la Torre's design judgment, since they were rarely in town during crucial phases of the project. "This was a challenging process," he recalls. "We made many long distance decisions. I would mail spiral-bound notebooks filled with drawings and specifications, and wait for their return responses." In spite of the obstacles, the clients are delighted with the outcome, and are enjoying the comfort of owning the perfect home away from home.

Above: The master bedroom sports sensuous chocolate brown suede fabric on the headboard and wall above.

PARIS / RONALD BRICKE

While Ronald Bricke was working on a demanding interior design project, he promised to buy himself a special present after its completion. Bricke's reward was an apartment in Paris, France, the ultimate gift that keeps on giving.

Prior to purchasing his pied-a-terre, the native New Yorker traveled to the city twice a year. Fascinated by Paris's beauty, culture, and cuisine, he enrolled in short-term classes at Ecole de Cuisine La Varenne, the famed Parisian cooking school. With the apartment as his base, Bricke presently manages five visits each year, for one to two weeks. "This is totally different from staying in a hotel," he says. "I have had an opportunity to meet people and explore neighborhoods in a way that no tourist experiences."