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A PASSION FOR OUR PAST

Designer Thomas Jayne creates a comfortable space for a museum-quality collection

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TWIN PHILADELPHIA CHAIRS by Thomas Tuft, symmetrically placed beneath a pair of gilt wood mirrors, lend a sense of classical harmony to a room integrating a modern sofa covered in Palazzo by Donghia with lamps made from antique Chinese jars, a Pembroke table and 19th century French clock with a figure of Washington. Above the fireplace is *The Reindeer*, an important American painting by James Bard.

The trick was to create rooms that suggested, not reproduced, period interiors.



A 6TH-CENTURY BUDDHA in the sitting room, these pages, keeps watch over the drawing room's rare 18th-century Philadelphia pieces. Custom woven and colored wool damask upholstery plays up the forms of the double-peaked sofa, wing chair, and side chair grouped around a mahogany Logan table. Cushions on the sofa are made from 18th-century dress silk brocade. A CHIPPENDALE chair and Bombay chest of drawers, ca. 1775, top right, keep company with a 1768 pastel by John Copley. THE INTRICATELY CARVED armchair, detail, right, is a prime example of the Rococo style in American furniture.



“We used decoration to bridge a collection and a family house” - THOMAS JAYNE



IT ALL BEGAN with a sofa. A passionate collector of Early American furniture had acquired a very rare and beautiful double-peak sofa at auction and wanted to know how to reupholster it. An ardent young decorator with a comprehensive knowledge of classic American furnishings had seen this sofa earlier and had become intrigued by the idea of finding the perfect fabric to cover it. It was inevitable that these two men would meet and that, as so often happens when an artist finds his ideal patron, a productive working relationship would begin.

The collector and his wife (he is a partner in a financial management firm, she is a museum docent) live in a 1930s center-hall Colonial in Westchester County, New York. For years they had been buying ancient Indian and Himalayan art, and furniture in the late Federal style. They had become attracted to the graceful silhouettes of earlier American furniture; and though they had a world-class collection, they didn't know how to showcase it. Enter decorator Thomas Jayne, a veteran of Winterthur, the Cooper Hewitt, and Christie's (not to mention Parish-Hadley), who had just returned from London with some knockout period-style fabrics and trims. He knew just how the Philadelphia double-peak sofa should be reupholstered: not in silk damask but in the more historically

In Richard Cameron's addition, a new stairwell winds down gracefully to the lower floor



accurate wool damask. He envisioned handmade silk tufts to embellish the horsehair mattress. He envisioned a subtle shade of pink instead of the more traditional red.

The collector was impressed. He in turn began to envision an entire house where his fabulous pieces could be displayed to advantage. He enlisted Jayne to redecorate and to help him plan an addition. "We used decoration to bridge his great collection and his family house," says Jayne. "He had all these wonderful things but was living in this, by most definitions, modest

house." The trick was to create rooms that suggested, but did not slavishly reproduce, period interiors; this was a house to be lived in as well as admired. Thus, in the refurbished drawing room, the Philadelphia sofa, with its chaste, straight legs, rests on a Persian carpet—an anomaly in an eighteenth-century room—near an easy chair that would normally reside in a Colonial bedroom. A modern sofa is flanked by a generic Pembroke table. Classical harmony is achieved through symmetry (matched Thomas Tuft chairs flanking a window), color

In Jayne's fluid "essay in decoration," everything fits



GAUZE FROM Rogers & Goffigon, with Scalamandre silk trim, creates a country ambience in an upstairs bedroom, this page. The reproduction bed is draped with a quilt from Laura Fisher, and Christopher Norman's Robbie striped wallpaper serves as a foil for one of many China-trade paintings. THE ROOM'S LUXURIOUS COUNTERPART is a downstairs bedroom, opposite page, top; its early-19th-century canopy from Florian Papp is swathed, like the club chairs, in Hydrangea from Colefax & Fowler.

(neutral walls, pink upholstery and draperies), and proportion (a Salem chest-on-chest instead of a Philadelphia case piece, which would be out of scale). Everywhere are singular objects, including canvases by Copley and Bard and an intricately carved Chippendale chair. Jayne recalls how the collector, walking through the Metropolitan Museum's American wing with curator Morrison Heckscher, said, "It makes me so happy to be here!" Heckscher quipped, "You just like coming here because your furniture is better."

THE QUALITY OF the collection posed an unusual problem. "Usually you're dealing with antiques as accessories," says Jayne, "but here the objects are so good, you don't want to distract from them." He assembled a "committee of taste" (including an upholsterer and a museum curator) to make decisions about fabric and trim. Jayne researched historic, block-printed wallcoverings for the front passage. Cole & Sons, in London, carved new pearwood blocks to recreate a nineteenth-century pattern with an Indian design—one of many allusions to the couple's extraordinary collection of Asian antiquities. In a typical period room, you wouldn't find a fifth-century Indian lingam sculpture, used in fertility rites—unless, by chance, an eccentric ship's captain had lugged it home. But here, in the newly constructed stair hall, it fits, part of the fluid "essay in decoration" that is a Thomas Jayne interior.

The addition, by architect Richard Cameron, draws light through skylights inspired by those at London's Soane museum, through glass screens, and through an oval interior window based loosely on one at a historic New York house. The new breakfast room, with its slightly elaborate swag curtains, is a logical extension of the dining room, while the new sitting room, with ample windows, serves as a brilliant backdrop for the drawing room's double-peak sofa.

The new staircase winds gracefully to the lower floor, with its card room and the collector's mother's bedroom. A far cry from the upstairs bedroom, with its folksy gauze curtains and painted floor, it has an English campaign bed from Florian Papp and oceans of chintz—a nod to her penchant for mid-twentieth-century luxury. As the collector and the decorator know quite well, that's American, too.



WARM PINE paneling, yellow silk damask, chintz curtains from an 1820s pattern, an 18th-century mahogany secretary bookcase—not to mention orange leather upholstery on a Philadelphia armchair—make the library, above, an inviting retreat. An American tea table, ca. 1750, is poised in front of a modern sofa. Sources, see back of book.