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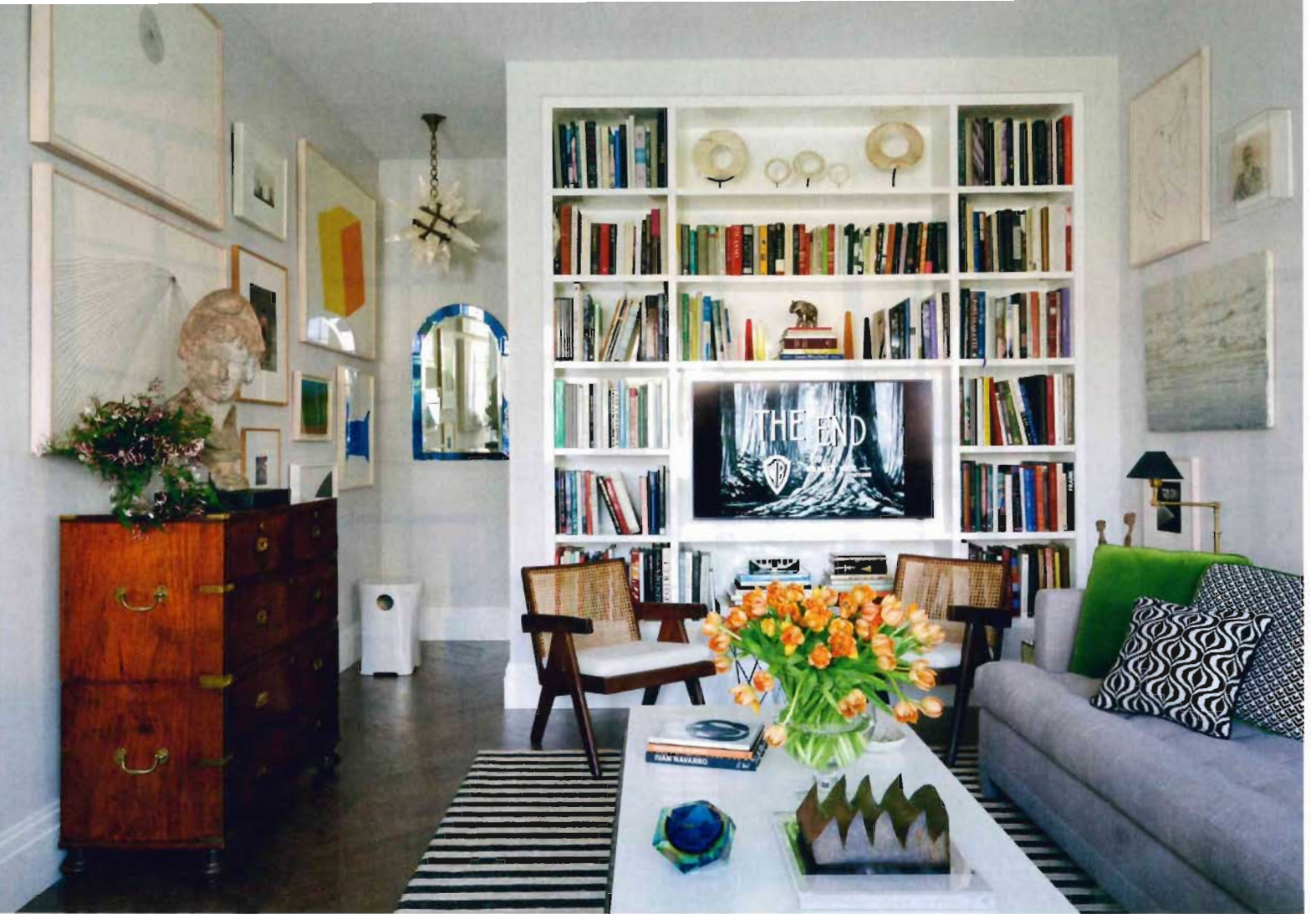
He wasn't even in the market, but when designer Timothy Whealon discovered a Gramercy Park penthouse surrounded by terraces and open to the Manhattan sky, he rose to the occasion

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In the living room of designer Timothy Whealon's Manhattan apartment, the sofa, inspired by a Billy Baldwin design and covered in a linen by Christopher Farr Cloth, and the cocktail table are custom designs, an abaca rug by Merida tops chevron-patterned oak floors, and the steel doors and windows are by Crittall. For details, see Resource 5.



THE ALLURE of open fields and endless blue skies is especially intense for any transplanted Midwesterner. Nowhere else in the country offers up the same kind of largesse. So when Manhattan-based interior designer Timothy Whealon, who grew up in Wisconsin, first saw this light-filled penthouse apartment above Gramercy Park, with spectacular views, his visceral response did not surprise him. “It doesn’t matter how accustomed one gets to living in the city, the attraction to an expanse—any expanse—is profound,” he says.

It didn’t matter that Whealon wasn’t even in the market for a new place when he spotted it. The minute he stepped out onto the honeycomb-tiled terrace that hugs three sides of the apartment, he was sold: “How could I resist the 80-year-old wisteria vines that were crawling everywhere?”

He couldn’t, so he didn’t. Eighteen floors up in a Beaux Arts building designed by Emery Roth, one of the city’s most prolific architects during the 1920s and ’30s, Whealon has found air and light. It comes streaming in by day through 14 new casement windows that faithfully reproduce the crumbling originals. When night falls, the gilded crown of the MetLife tower and the shimmering pyramid atop the New York Life building sparkle to the north, while open views of city and sky extend east and west.

Whealon has a thing for Roth’s buildings—his previous apartment on lower Fifth Avenue was also designed by the architect. That one featured coveted prewar details, including a gracious foyer, coffered ceilings, generous moldings, a fireplace, and a separate kitchen. But he gave up all that for these more humble rooms at the top, which

he believes are the former maid’s quarters for the Rockefellers, who once owned the building. “The apartment didn’t get the same treatment as the floors below, though it does have 11-foot-high ceilings,” he explains. “There’s a small entryway, no molding, and an open kitchen. But I can live with these things. I just have to look out the windows.”

With an eye toward that, the designer adopted an understated approach to the furnishings and used whatever wall space he had to hang his collection of photographs and works on paper. A low-slung sectional, upholstered the color of a winter sky, keeps company with a pair of Pierre Jeanneret cane chairs. “I wanted to be able to seat a lot of people and not block the view to the terrace,” Whealon says.

Not that there aren’t beautiful things to look at inside. Prints by Gerhard Richter, Ellsworth Kelly, and Giuseppe Penone, among others, line the living room walls. “Art is such a powerful way to make a space personal. I’m mostly drawn to smaller pieces cleverly arranged,” he says. The exception is an outsize photograph of lily of the valley by Inez van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin that hangs above his bed: “They grow like crazy around Lake Michigan, so I had to have it.” And

ABOVE: The living room’s vintage cane chairs are by Pierre Jeanneret, the mahogany chest was purchased at Sotheby’s, and the custom-made rock-crystal chandelier is by Alexandre Vossion; the circa-1940 mirror is by Maison Bagués. **FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** A custom-made bronze mirror from Wyeth hangs above an antique bench found at Christie’s in the living room; the floor lamp is from Galerie des Lampes. Whealon on the terrace of his apartment. The kitchen’s lacquer cabinetry is custom made, the backsplash and countertop are Calacatta marble, the range is by Viking, and the refrigerator is by Sub-Zero; the print is by Ellsworth Kelly. For details, see Resources.





Whealon made the most of all that light flooding in by strategically hanging a bronze mirror; look into it and you can see the reflection of another New York City skyline icon, a wood water tower.

Like the city itself, Whealon's apartment is an idiosyncratic mix. "I buy things as I travel and never think about where they are going to go," he says. "I want them because they are beautiful." He bought the campaign chest 20 years ago at a sale at Sotheby's, where he once worked on special projects in the decorative arts, because he was smitten with its patina. The bust of Minerva that sits on top was plucked from an antiques store in Palm Beach. Swedish artist Eva Hild created the stoneware sculpture in his bedroom. "I am not a purist by any means. Despite my Sotheby's training, connoisseurship is not my word," Whealon says with a laugh.

Indeed, his clients hire him for his ability to strike the right balance among classicism, comfort, and cool. "I could do a period room with my eyes closed, but it is far more interesting to use history as

the basis for design that feels very current," says Whealon, whose projects run the gamut from a villa in Morocco to a London townhouse to a Hamptons beach house. "I am as enamored of modernist pieces as I am of Chinese porcelain and plaster of paris. It can all work together if you understand why each piece is important."

As for his own home, the designer has no illusions about what makes it so meaningful. "I open the French doors the minute I get home, pour a glass of wine, take in the view, and have a few moments of gratitude," he says. ■

ABOVE: The master bedroom's custom-made bed is upholstered in an Amanda Nisbet Design fabric, the linens are by Casa Del Bianco, and the sconces are by Robert Kime; the antique lacquered tea stands are Chinese, the photograph is by Inez van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin, and the abaca rug is by Merida. **FACING PAGE:** The terrace features an aluminum table and bench by Harbour Outdoor, lanterns by Restoration Hardware, a screen made of cedar slats, and bluestone flooring; the plantings include boxwood, English ivy, and magnolia. For details, see Resources.

