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GENTLEMAN'S QUARTERS

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a Boston home provides its owner
a gracious, yet masculine, sanctuary
in the heart of the city.

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Gentleman's Quarters

Traditional, but never fussy, a Boston home provides its owner a gracious, yet masculine, sanctuary in the heart of the city.

text by regina cole | photography by richard mandelkorn
interior design: richard fitzgerald, r. fitzgerald and company
millwork: woodmeister master builders | produced by kyle hoepner



The gracious duplex at One Charles gives no hint of the fact that it represents the homeowner's first foray into the world of interior design. Its 3,000 square feet display such stylish ease, such a look of confident, long-practiced taste, you'd never guess the apartment's occupant was a novice at working with a design professional. When homeowner and designer look back on the way their partnership began and transpired, they agree that it was meant to be. | "Richard was recommended by my real estate agent, who had



the stylish anteroom, with its neoclassical dome, well-chosen antique furniture and floors stenciled to look like parquet, was created with the addition of the blue-striped wall.





in a living room dominated by the view at one end and the homeowner's piano at the other, tones of vibrant red and soothing blue harmonize with the richly paneled walls. designer richard fitzgerald blended antique pieces and traditionally upholstered furnishings for a classic look.



facing page: blue grasscloth frames the dining room, where a glass wall lets the view shine. *this page:* the dining room incorporates elements of empire decor in the chandelier, a reproduction of a grand napoleonic piece, and the gilded eagle supporting the marble-topped pier table.





The delightfully cozy library is an ideal place to gather for drinks before going out, or to curl up and watch TV. FitzGerald says he designed the room around the splendid English secretary.

gotten a sense of what I was looking for as we viewed various properties in the Back Bay,” the homeowner explains.

For his part, Boston designer Richard FitzGerald sought to give his client an educational head start. The long-established professional is accustomed to clients who have definite ideas about all aspects of interior decor, often as a result of previous projects. “When we made our initial appointment, I suggested that he get some ideas from books and magazines,” FitzGerald says. “This was a man who’d never done any decorating. He’d been too busy working. I thought that looking at pictures of interiors would help him to define his style.”

The homeowner was an eager study. “I brought a magazine to our initial meeting, intending to ask if Richard

could do work like that of the only design in the magazine that I really liked,” he recalls.

“Ironically, it was one of his projects! I didn’t realize it until I read the article a bit more closely just before the meeting.” Adds FitzGerald: “He may not have done anything like this before, but he knew what he likes. Unlike a lot of new clients who bring fat folders or reams of notes, he just pointed to that one story and said, ‘This is what I want.’ He’d come to the right place.”

For his client, a move to downtown Boston represented a new beginning in several ways. “I had previously lived in a single colonial house on the North Shore and had furniture that reflected the way my styles changed over the years. It was a true mishmash,” he says. “I decided to start from scratch. My piano was the only exception.”

Today his grand piano anchors a living room that epitomizes pure stylistic cohesion. Warm woodwork, comfort-



the roof terrace doubles as a luxurious outdoor living and dining room. *below:* a carved alabaster pedestal sink stands under an antique federal mirror frame.



able upholstered seating and time-honored antiques come together to create a room with ease, elegance and a magnificent view. The effect of effortless traditionalism continues throughout for a decor that's fresh, colorful and calm. Getting there from the initial purchase, however, was an extensive process.

"When you buy one of these new units, you get what is basically an empty box; there are no architectural elements," says FitzGerald. "We created a more traditional environment with moldings, paneling and columns and by reconfiguring the space. Originally, when you came in the entrance, you looked straight into the kitchen. We built a new wall and created a new hallway. Now, you step into a gracious foyer."

The foyer boasts an antique Chippendale mirror hung against walls painted in blue-on-blue stripes. A pair of English hall chairs embellished with coats of arms flank a reproduction chest. A gilded and patterned dome crowns the satisfying composition, lending drama and glamour to the small area.

heart-stopping views throughout the home provide a number of beckoning corners like this one, in the master bedroom. *below*: a faux finish on the master bedroom walls creates a masculine backdrop for antiques like the Italian four-poster bed.



FitzGerald had the floor stenciled to resemble antique parquet. “The owner wanted what I call a Beacon Hill look,” the designer explains. “It is characterized by this space: it calls on history, but is not without pizzazz.”

FitzGerald also used faux painting to great effect. The tapestry in the living room, for instance, is a mural cleverly painted to look like one from a set of twelve at Paris’s Élysée Palace.

To execute the millwork that turned raw new space into a finished, traditional home, he called on Woodmeister Master Builders, a Boston-area firm long experienced in such projects. Woodmeister’s expertise came into play beyond the gorgeous millwork in evidence throughout the house. Jim Catlin of Woodmeister says, “We had to relocate a sprinkler line to make space for the dome; luckily, there was no HVAC stuff up there. That’s the kind of interesting challenge we love.”

As the project progressed, the homeowner found that one of his most important contributions was faith in his designer. “I was really concerned. I thought that a new condo building with lots of windows would lend itself much more easily to Art Deco or contemporary design,” he says. “I wasn’t so sure that it could be designed to have a traditional feel. I asked many times, ‘How is this going to look?’ Each time, Richard was right. I think it worked out very well.”

A grand passage with flanking columns leads from the living room to the dining room, where the blue grasscloth wall covering FitzGerald chose acts as a vibrant foil for a comfortable, traditional room. It, in turn, leads into that most traditional of spaces, a book-lined, paneled library. Along with the cherry paneling, superb antique and reproduction furniture contribute to the room’s historic sensibility.

From the living room, stairs lead up to a furnished and landscaped roof terrace with magnificent views of the surrounding city. FitzGerald enlarged the head house at the top of the stairs to create a light-filled home office. Here again, the homeowner trusted



With its glass walls and southwest orientation, the master bedroom ran the risk of being too bright and hot. FitzGerald mitigated the light with colors and textures that keep the room cool and grounded.

the designer. “I became enamored of the magnificent woodwork that was in the library and living room, and suggested that we use some of it in the second-floor office,” he says. “Richard thought it would be too much, and advocated lighter colors and a bamboo look. The end result is, I think, perfect.”

In the master bedroom, brown faux-painted walls and a brown patterned Axminster carpet create a soothing, yet masculine, background for a corner space mostly composed of views. With its glass walls and southwest orientation, the room ran the risk of being too bright and hot. FitzGerald mitigated the light with colors and textures

that keep the room cool and grounded. The stylish bath reflects the owner’s penchant for bold reds and blues.

FitzGerald’s client says he is “extraordinarily pleased with the end result.” Would he undertake such a project again? The answer is a sure “yes.” In fact, he and the designer are already at work on another home, an 1890 Queen Anne cottage in Key West, Florida. He knows he’ll like the results. **NEH**

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