

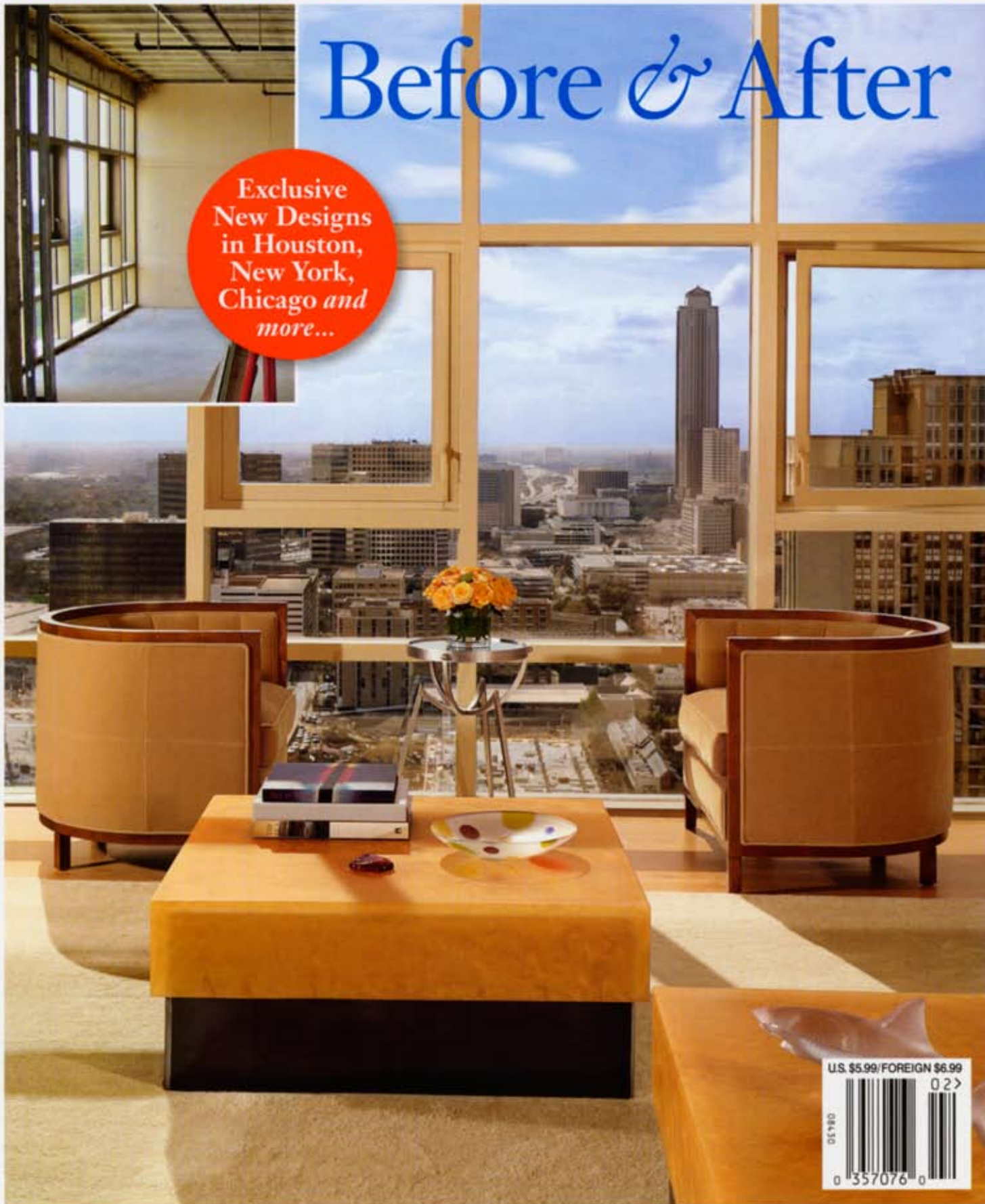
# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF DESIGN

FEBRUARY 2009

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BEFORE



AFTER

# On Sutton Place

PAST AND PRESENT VISIONS MERGE IN A NEW YORK APARTMENT

Interior Renovation Architecture by Ageloff & Associates/Interior Design by McMillen, Inc.  
Text by Wendy Moonan/After Photography by Durston Saylor

After Ann Pyne, of McMillen, Inc., renovated an apartment in New York, she found photographs of a 1920s design Eleanor McMillen Brown, the firm's founder, had done for Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Field III. That design—in the same building and possibly the same apartment—had long since vanished, she says, “but I was amazed that two designers 80 years apart could come up with so many of the same solutions.”

ABOVE AND ABOVE RIGHT: In the gallery, double doors are located “exactly where a mirror hung in the Field residence,” says Pyne. A Louis XVI *bureau à cylindre* is at rear. RIGHT AND OPPOSITE: Each of the designers placed a long sofa against the same wall in the living room, with a large screen above it and matching lamps and chairs on either side.



BEFORE





AFTER



The good bones of the apartment were a given: grand public rooms, a wide gallery, tall ceilings, double doors, large windows and Neoclassical moldings.



ABOVE AND ABOVE RIGHT: "My client prefers open spaces and entertaining in a large circle—what I call a big O—so I ignored the fireplace and situated pieces on the east and west walls to provide the appearance of two seating groups, which can operate as one," says the designer.

Many design commissions are straightforward, but not one of Ann Pyne's latest Manhattan projects. It was fraught with psychological issues for her.

A writer of fiction and a partner at the venerable New York design firm McMillen, Inc., Pyne was asked to decorate a spacious prewar apartment for a recently retired professional woman. The apartment occupies a wing of the 12th floor at

One Sutton Place South, a 13-story co-op building completed in 1927 that is known for its neo-Georgian grandeur, pedigreed residents and sweeping views of the East River. It is considered one of the most prestigious residential buildings in the city, a famous collaboration between architects Rosario Candela and Cross & Cross.

The owner did not have a particularly complicated program in mind—she wanted a new master bedroom, dressing room,





office and kitchen—and she and Pyne have a good working relationship: Pyne had designed a previous apartment for her.

Pyne's problem with the project was more personal. She had grown up in the building.

"Immediately, I knew this apartment would be a challenge," says Pyne. "My mother, Betty Sherrill, president of McMillen for the last 40 years, lives in the same building, one floor below my client.

"We moved in when I was in the throes of adolescence," Pyne recalls. "Despite that, I grew up in awe of how my mother renovated and decorated our apartment. She was—and is—such a strong presence in my life that I waited until I was 50 before I took on working at McMillen."

Pyne's second issue with the project came only after she had finished it. Quite by accident, she discovered that an apartment with the identical layout—possi-

bly the same one—had been designed 80 years earlier by Eleanor McMillen Brown, the founder of McMillen, for Marshall Field III (heir to the Chicago department store fortune).

"Little did I know at the time I was working on the apartment that I was also competing with my mother's mentor, the indomitable, revered, authoritarian and never-wrong Eleanor Brown," Pyne says. "I was sorting out some old black-





AFTER





**LEFT AND OPPOSITE:** The dining room is “a shimmering space of greens and blues to match the color scheme of the other rooms,” Pyne says. Regency chairs with brass-inlaid crest rails surround the table. Nesle gilt-bronze-and-crystal chandelier. Rug, Elizabeth Eakins.

**BELOW:** Architect Scott Ageloff tore down the wall between the kitchen and pantry “to create a family gathering space that has a classic feel,” he says. Adds Pyne, “Attention like this to a kitchen was unheard of in Mrs. Brown’s early career.” Maison Gerard planter and bowl. Wall-covering, Clarence House.







AFTER

OPPOSITE BOTTOM AND ABOVE: The master bedroom—formerly a library—opens onto the living room. The custom cabinets “provide symmetry and storage,” notes Pyne (opposite top). A blue-gray strié glaze was applied to the walls. The valance was modeled after one at Winterthur. Cowtan & Tout chair fabric.

and-white photographs in the McMillen archives for a book I’m writing when I saw something that looked oddly familiar. The rooms in the pictures seemed to be the very rooms I had just finished decorating. I looked with trepidation at photograph after photograph to see if I had come up short.”

Pyne did not have to worry. She had done a fine job, even though, she says, “I might well claim that an ‘anxiety of influence’ overlays all of the rooms of this com-

mission, to crib the famous title of Harold Bloom’s book.”

The good bones of the apartment were a given: grand public rooms, a wide gallery, tall ceilings, double doors, large windows and Neoclassical moldings. “Everything was there under 30 coats of paint,” the client says.

Pyne’s brief was quite different from that of Brown. “Apartment buildings were an entirely new phenomenon in 1927,” she explains. “Mrs. Brown seems





“The client’s preference for blues and greens, to go with the river, made it easy for one room to flow into another.”



to have been thinking of these rooms as belonging to a country house that was on the small side, not a city apartment that was very large.”

Brown filled the apartment with dark Continental furniture and expensive accessories, such as huge antique sconces, tapestries and coromandel screens. Pyne’s client wanted clean, light-filled spaces that weren’t too formal. “She didn’t want clutter, fussiness or lots of seating,” Pyne says.

In the living room, the designer planned two seating groups that face each other. She chose floor-length moss-green taffeta draperies and generous valances to impart more verticality to the windows. For a focal point (and a bit of glamour), she added a fine antique mantel, on which she placed a gilt-bronze candelabra and an Empire clock. She chose a Louis XVI gilt frame for the mirror above the fireplace, designed gilt cornices for the windows and mounted a large 17th-century Japanese screen over

the sofa. The effect is spare, luxurious and calm. “Ann knows less is better for me,” the client says. “I have to go as simple as I can.”

Pyne and architects Scott Ageloff and Meredith Colon turned the adjoining room, a wood-paneled library in the Field residence, into the master bedroom.

“We made private spaces out of the public ones,” Pyne explains. “After all, my client bought the apartment for its views, and she

*continued on page 156*



# DATEBOOK

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

Places to go, designs to see,  
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## An American Celebration

This past fall, Architectural Digest and **David Yurman** co-hosted a special evening of photography honoring acclaimed lensman Harry Benson and his book *Harry Benson's America*.

The jeweler's Madison Avenue boutique in New York City was transformed into a mini gallery exhibiting images featured in the book, and guests had the chance to have a copy signed by the legend himself. A portion of the proceeds from the evening's jewelry sales were donated to the American Cancer Society.



From left: Photos from *Harry Benson's America* graced the boutique's window displays; Harry Benson autographs one of his books.

## DESIGN DATEBOOK NOTE

Two photos in the January issue's "Design Datebook" were misidentified. The correct information appears below.



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## ON SUTTON PLACE

*continued from page 145*

wanted to wake up to the glorious vision of the sun rising over the East River."

The bedroom has an Americana flavor, boasting an 18th-century American chest of drawers and a four-poster. Pyne chose a valance shape inspired by one at the Winterthur Museum in Delaware. The silvery-blue damask draperies and bed hangings echo the palette of the living room. "The client's preference for blues and greens, to go with the river and the sky, made it easy for one room to flow into another," the designer remarks.

By reworking the dimensions of the former master bedroom, the team was able to create an elegant dressing room, which

"Little did I know at the time I was working on the apartment that I was also competing with my mother's mentor."

Pyne decorated with a French Art Déco desk and chair, a bronze French lamp and sheer white draperies.

Directly across the gallery from the dressing room is the formal dining room, where Pyne and Ageloff replaced the mantel above the decorative fireplace. Now a fine Regency cut-crystal chandelier, a Regency-style table and brass-inlaid Regency chairs sit precisely where Mrs. Brown had situated several large antiques in the Fields' apartment.

Ageloff and Colon retained most of the Neoclassical architectural details throughout but converted a maid's room into a bath and, in the service area, removed a wall between the small kitchen and pantry to create one large room with views of the river. Says Ageloff, "The great challenge was time. With New York co-ops, summer work rules require that you finish in three months. It took a lot of advance planning."

In the entrance hall, a portrait of General John "Black Jack" Pershing, the World War I hero, by society painter Philip Alexius de László lends a sense of gravitas. If Mrs. Brown were alive today, she would likely recognize László's work—and almost certainly give a nod of approval to Pyne. □