

INTERIOR DESIGN

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new heights

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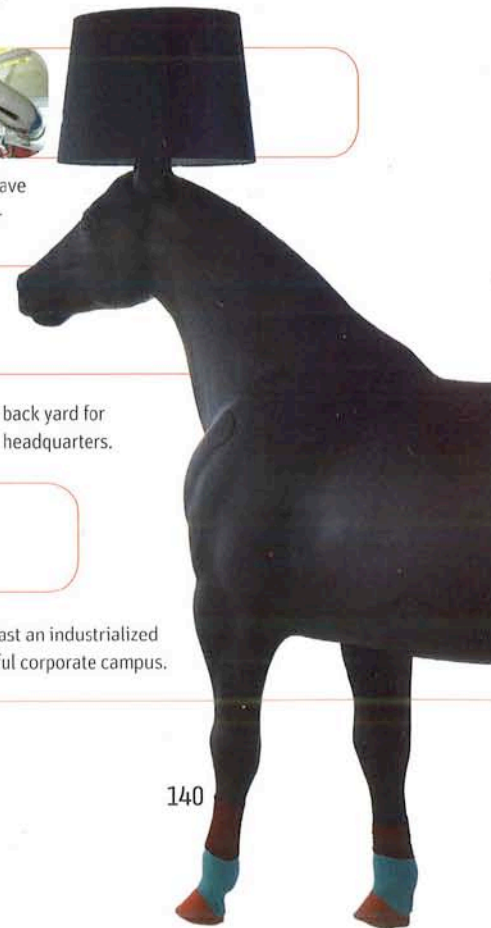
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high-floor heaven

text: *molly heintz* photography: *eric laignel*

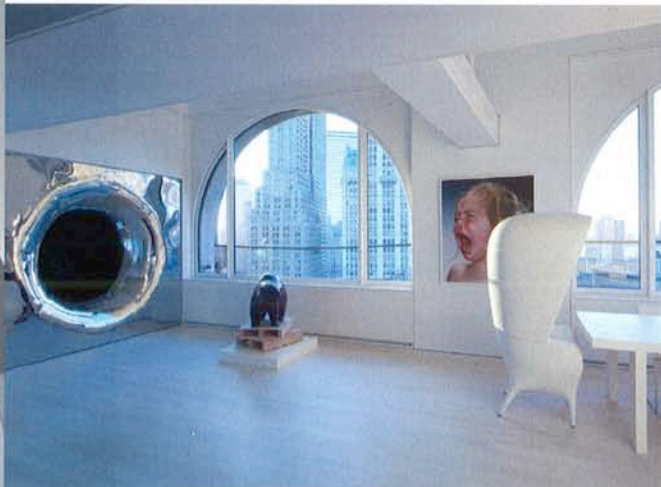
It's four floors of celestial delight in a New York penthouse by David Hotson and Ghislaine Viñas



Previous spread: In a New York penthouse by David Hotson Architect and Ghislaine Viñas Interior Design, the bottom of a custom stainless-steel slide, which runs through the apartment's four floors, opens onto the dining area.

Left, from top: The penthouse sits on the top of a steel-framed 1896 building; just above the original copper cornice, a slender walkway accessible from the apartment's terrace offers 360-degree views of the city. A structural column and beams, all original, along with a Jae Hoon Lee photograph, appoint the entry hall.

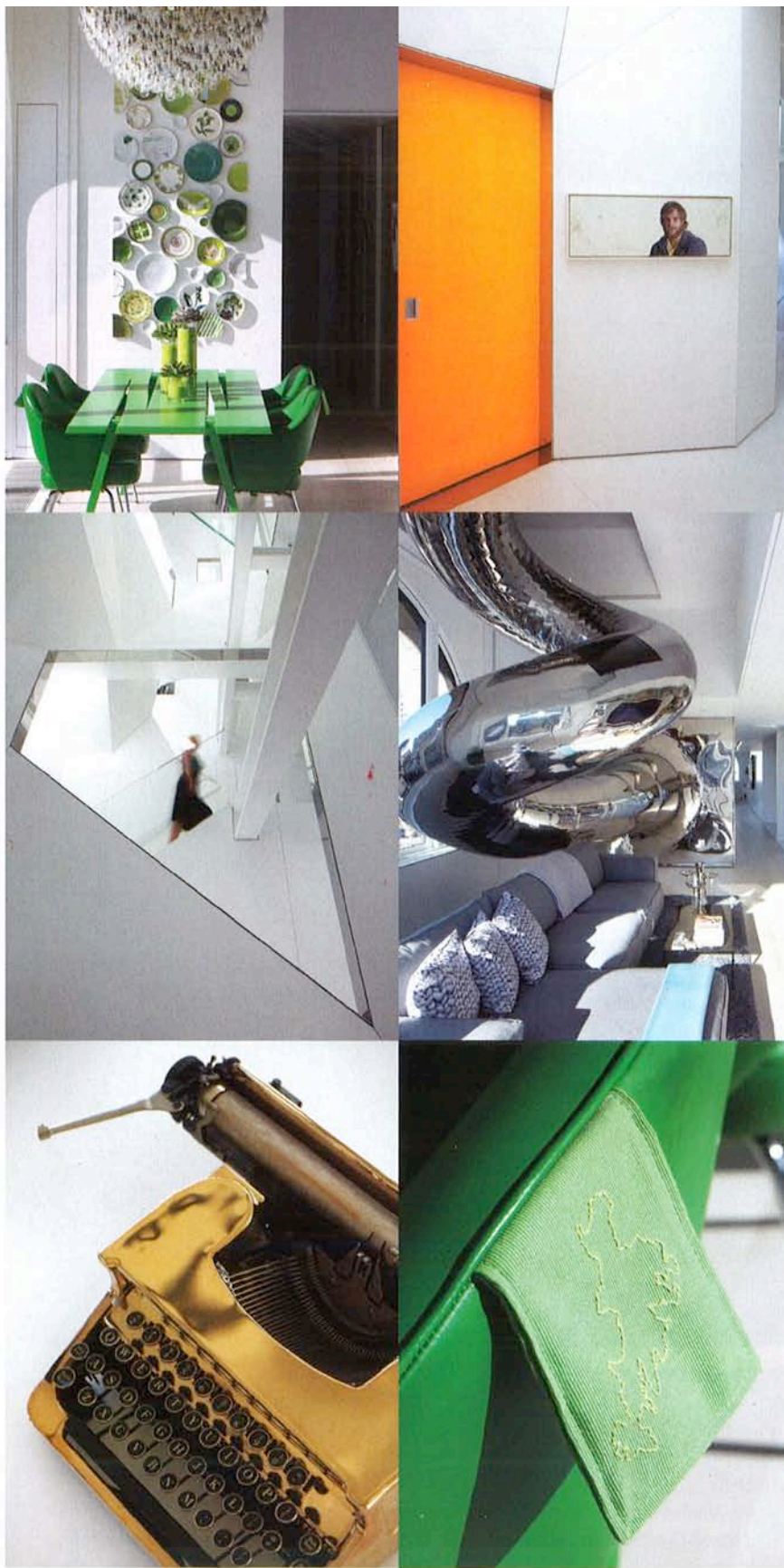
Right, from top: Front's equine lamp overlooks the living area, where a quilted sofa by Paola Navone, a sectional by Pier Luigi Frighetto, and leather-upholstered armchairs surround a custom table by UM Project. A ceramic sculpture by Tim Berg & Rebekah Myers, a photograph by Jill Greenberg, and a Jaime Hayon armchair furnish one end of the dining area.



Like an otherworldly security detail, 15-foot-tall winged caryatids guard each of the four external corners of a penthouse apartment in lower Manhattan. Their stern expressions recall the Statue of Liberty, whose vigil in New York Harbor began in 1886, nine years before the terra-cotta figures were installed atop what was then one of the city's tallest buildings. Designed by architect R.H. Robertson, the 21-story tower, a stone's throw from City Hall Park, was among New York's first steel-framed structures. Given that the proto-skyscraper was built by the American Tract Society, a

publisher of religious pamphlets, the imposing caryatids necessarily appear angelic.

"It's an idiosyncratic, ornamental house form: a chateau atop a skyscraper," says architect David Hotson of the unusual residence perched above the park. "The scale of decoration is just enormous," he notes, pointing out the mammoth egg-and-dart detail of a copper cornice running just above the arcade—flourishes intended to register at street level. Viewed from the apartment's 1,500-square-foot terrace, however, the oversize architectural ornament takes on a surreal, fun-house



Left, from top: The breakfast area's Mike & Maaike table, Eero Saarinen chairs, Tim Fishlock chandelier, and ceramic-plate installation by Viñas. A cutout around the staircase, edged in polished steel. One of the clients' vintage typewriters. **Right, from top:** At the elevator entry, a Cayce Zavaglia embroidery and marble flooring, which switches to bleached maple throughout. The slide twisting through the library. A breakfast-area chair's stitching by Viñas.

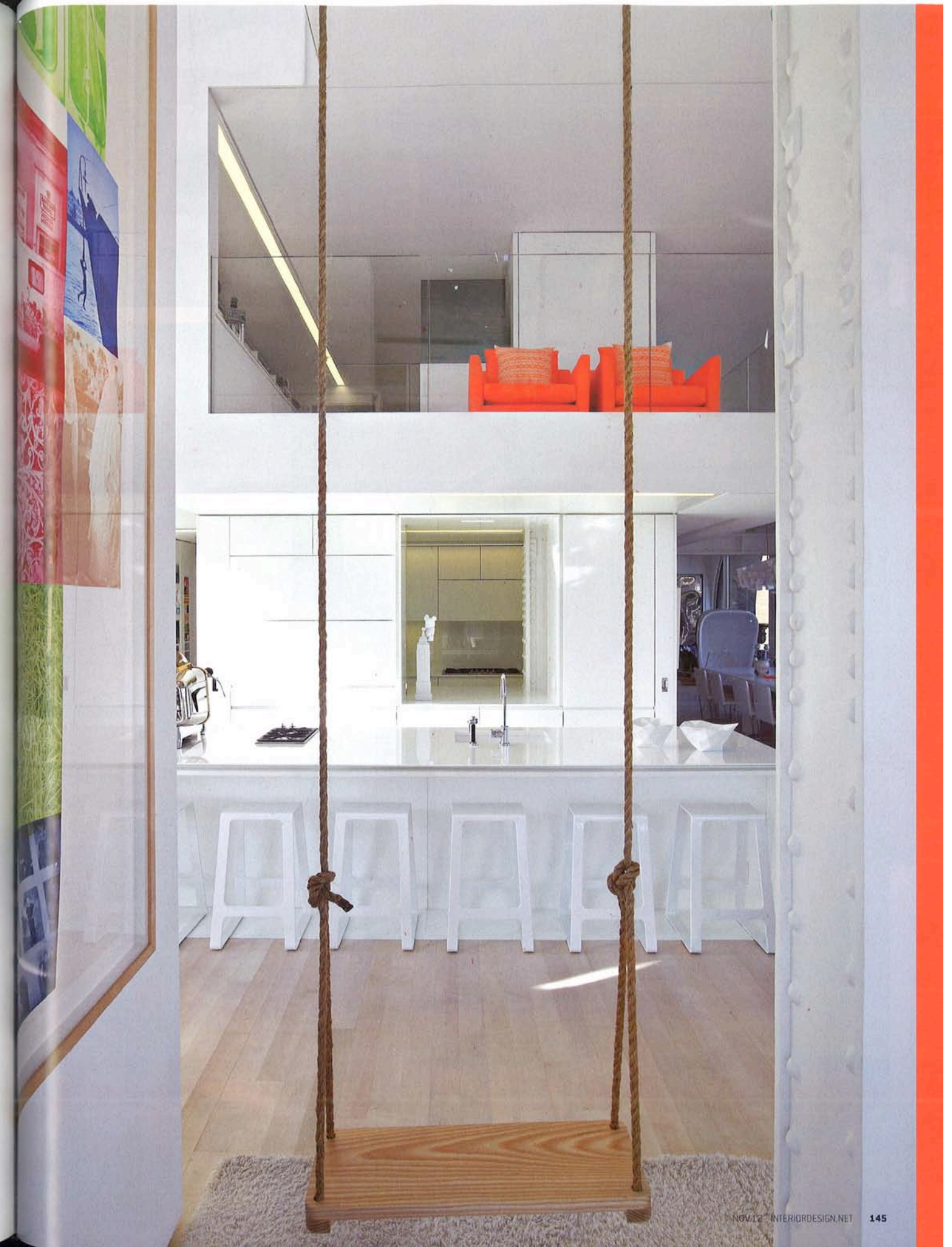
Opposite: A custom swing by UM Project and a Robert Rauschenberg intaglio are at the threshold to the kitchen, where stools by Jonathan Nesci line the glass-topped island.

quality that proves an appropriate prelude to the apartment's dazzling if occasionally disorienting interior.

The building was converted into condominiums in 2002, but the top-floor residence was among the last to sell, in part because it truly was an architectural bauble, lacking plumbing as well as heating and cooling systems. What it did have was the possibility of a 45-foot ceiling and 360-degree city views out massive half-moon windows created by the building's Romanesque arches. In 2007, the space caught the eye of an intrepid couple. Having previously worked with Ghislaine Viñas on two residential projects, the potential buyers sought her opinion. "It takes a special kind of client to tackle this sort of project," says the interior designer who, knowing they were up for the adventure, advised them to make the leap.

Viñas introduced the clients to Hotson, whom she knew through mutual friends, and, shortly afterward, David Hotson Architect and Ghislaine Viñas Interior Design began their first collaboration. "Oh, there were plenty of negotiations," Viñas says, acknowledging their radically different yet ultimately complementary approaches to what evolved into a four-level, 6,600-square-foot, four-bedroom interior. "David's work is incredibly pure," she notes of Hotson, who has worked on numerous projects with high-profile architects and artists, from Santiago Calatrava to Maya Lin. "But I'm all about messing with things, pushing things further," she continues. "For me, that's why the project is so successful—the architecture is spectacular and very strong, but to make this a home, you also have to inject a little humor."

Humor, as in an 80-foot-long curving slide? Or perhaps a steel column reimagined as a 45-foot climbing wall? Maybe a guest-bedroom mural showcasing an artist's interpretation of Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch? Taking their cues from the clients, who are serious about play and brought plenty of whimsical





Left, from top: A chandelier by Barovier & Toso hangs over the custom headboard in the master bedroom, which the owners' two felines enter from their own catwalk. The master bathroom features porcelain-tile flooring and an entire wall of lacquered-MDF storage. **Right, from top:** Jason Rogenes's pendant fixture floats above the dining area's custom UM Project table and Antonio Citterio chairs. The library, which adjoins the master suite, has a wool-covered sofa by Frighetto.

ideas to the table—say, a catwalk just for their two felines—Hotson and Viñas conjured a dreamlike topography that demands to be explored. The expansive, quirky landscape offers diverse modes of transport, including a variety of chutes and ladders together with an exquisitely detailed central stair. Edged in polished steel, it traverses multiple unexpected design moments, such as a dizzying but delightful glass bridge on the third level.

"We were looking to engage you in the complex envelope of space and also connect you to the city," says Hotson, whose faceted geometric volumes appear chiseled away—like gem

stones in the negative—producing striking interior and exterior vistas. "We created design voids and sheathed them with finished material so you see the intersection of empty volumes. Then we injected them with intense color."

Against the neutral white backdrop, Viñas deployed saturated oranges and greens but in a strategic way. "From high up in the apartment, you see many different spaces simultaneously," she explains, referring to the fourth-floor attic's bird's-eye view of the various levels below. "You have to create a balancing effect." Looking down from that elevated perch reveals distinct pools of eye-popping color, ▶





Opposite top, from left: A daybed is nestled next to a dormer window in one of the three guest bedrooms, all of which are on the apartment's third floor. The pattern of the hand-screened wallpaper in the master bedroom is by Dan Funderburgh. **Opposite bottom, from left:** The view up from the first-floor stairwell takes in the glass bridge on the third floor. The medicine cabinet in one of the two guest bathrooms is set into a dormer window and, when open, a peephole in its back reveals a glimpse of Brooklyn. **Top:** The bridge leads to another guest room. **Bottom:** The slide has several acrylic windows along its 80-foot length.



like the expanse of florid chintz upholstery in the balcony lounge extending over the living area, an all-white affair except for a commanding black floor lamp in the form of a life-size equine statue.

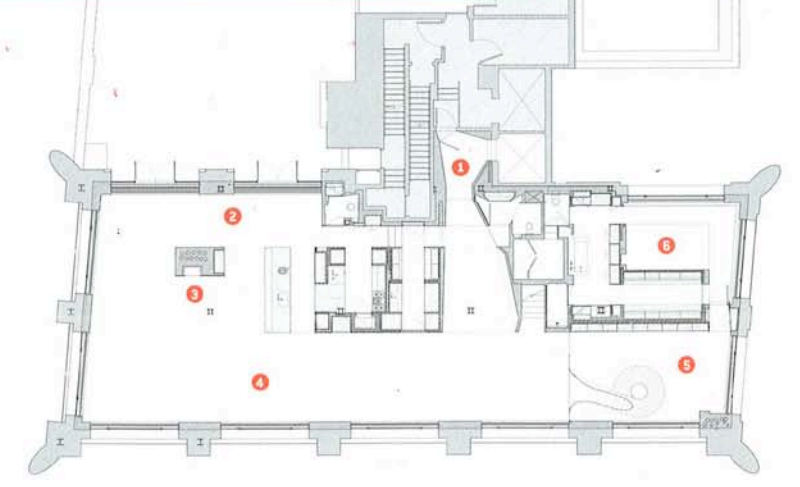
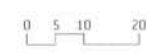
While concept runs high in the space, it's pleasantly mitigated by a sense of casual comfort. The kitchen island lined with bar stools serves as a kind of central hearth, acting as a connector between the open-plan living and dining areas as well as a mezzanine office space, which houses a collection of vintage typewriters and a pair of chairs upholstered in fluorescent orange leather. Pillows covered in a print of oversize cable knit invite a nap on the library's sectional sofa. A pin-up wall becomes a large-scale version of a refrigerator-door gallery in the kitchen hallway, where a simple wooden swing hangs—no doubt the most irresistible seat in house.

Along with the apartment's awesome dimensions—the living area alone could easily accommodate a troupe of trapeze artists—it's the small-scale surprises that make the space so memorable: A peephole in a shower frames a view of the Chrysler Building; a coffee table by UM Project hides figurines and maps, ➤

Left, from top: Vinas's daughters, Mia Soleil and Saskia Luna, sit in the entry to the slide, which begins in the fourth-floor attic. It winds through one of the guest rooms. **Right, from top:** The digital wallpaper mural Everland, by DFC and David Franco and inspired by Michael Jackson's ranch, was produced in a custom size for the room. A Todd Selby photograph of interior designer Jacques Grange hangs above the bed in another guest room.



- 1 ENTRY
- 2 BREAKFAST AREA
- 3 KITCHEN
- 4 LIVING/DINING AREA
- 5 LIBRARY
- 6 MASTER SUITE





Left, from top: A peephole in the shower of the same guest bathroom framing a view of the Chrysler Building. The attic with cotton-covered floor cushions and Jan-Paul Kaiser's fiberglass sculpture. Looking 45 feet down from the fourth floor. **Right, from top:** The climbing-wall harness and footholds, both secured to steel beams. The 1,500-square-foot terrace off the kitchen. The balcony's built-in seating, upholstered in cotton chintz.

Opposite: The balcony, nicknamed the nest, has balustrades of tempered glass. The harness and footholds were installed because the husband in the client couple recently began climbing lessons.

personal treasures of the owners; the kitchen is anchored by one of the building's original raw-steel beams, softened with a coat of white matte paint. For the skyscraper's builders, the space was a sculptural showpiece with celestial aspirations. The new owners, who love playing host to family and friends, have created their own high-floor heaven, a strongly personalized home where modernism meets Wallace & Gromit. 

Go to interiordesign.net/hotsonvinas12 for a behind-the-scenes look at the penthouse photo shoot.

PROJECT TEAM

MICHAEL KONOW; AMY FARBER; MARK TIMMINS; JOHN WATSON; PHILIP BERKOWITZ; JEROME BARBU; AUSTIN SAKONG; DAVID HOTSON ARCHITECT. VANÉ BROUSSARD; HAYLEY SINGLETON; BRANDON LENOIR; KATHRYN MCVITTIE; ANNE BROWN; MORGAN PEDERSON; ABBY SAYAGE. GHISLAINE VINAS INTERIOR DESIGN. TILLOTSON DESIGN ASSOCIATES: LIGHTING CONSULTANT. TARR TECHNOLOGY CONSULTING: AUDIOVISUAL CONSULTANT. CERAMI: ACOUSTICAL CONSULTANT. ROBERT SILMAN ASSOCIATES: STRUCTURAL ENGINEER. DEWHURST MACFARLANE AND PARTNERS: STRUCTURAL GLASS ENGINEER. ALTIERI SEBOR WIEBER: MEP. KOL INDUSTRIES; PRIMO REMODELING; RÖTHLISBERGER INNENAUSBAU: WOODWORK. SILVER LINING INTERIORS: GENERAL CONTRACTOR.

PRODUCT SOURCES

FROM FRONT SACCO CARPET: RUG (LIVING AREA). MOODI: HORSE LAMP. POLTRONA FRAU: ARMCHAIRS. BAXTER: QUILTED SOFA. ESTEL THROUGH DDC DOMUS DESIGN COLLECTION: SECTIONAL SOFA (LIVING AREA), SOFA (LIBRARY). FLOS: FLOOR LAMP (LIVING AREA). TOM DIXON: ROUND SIDE TABLE. THREE BALL CLIMBING: FOOHOLDS. BD BARCELONA DESIGN: ARMCHAIR (DINING AREA). KNOLL: CHAIRS (BREAKFAST AREA). COUNCIL: TABLE. AMG DESIGN: TRIM, BALUSTRADE (STAIRWAY). KASBAH MOD: CUSTOM TYPEWRITER (MEZZANINE). CASTEL TILE: FLOOR SLABS (ENTRY), ISLAND TOP (KITCHEN). HALE: STOOLS. DORNBRACHT: SINK FITTINGS. ABC CARPET & HOME: CHAIRS (MEZZANINE). DUALOY LEATHER: CHAIR UPHOLSTERY. INTERIOR DESIGN & CABINERY ART: CUSTOM HEADBOARD (MASTER BEDROOM). DUNE: SIDE TABLE. PLUG: CHANDELIER. FLAVOR PAPER: WALLPAPER (BEDROOMS). DUX DESIGN: BEDS. MATEDO: BEDDING. STONE SOURCE: FLOOR TILE (MASTER BATHROOM). RSA LIGHTING: CEILING FIXTURES. BAIN ULTRA: TUB. VOLA: SINK FITTINGS (BATHROOMS). B&B ITALIA: CHAIRS (DINING AREA). ARONSON'S FLOOR COVERING: RUG (LIBRARY). SNURK BEDDING: PILLOWS. BITPLAY: LAMP. DRIADE: CANDELABRA. A+R: HOOKS (BEDROOM). SPITFIREGIRL PRODUCTIONS: ZEBRA STRIPE PILLOWS. EVANS & PAUL: SINK (BATHROOM). EMPIRE ARCHITECTURAL METAL & GLASS CORP.: MIRROR. ROCHE BOBOIS: CUSHIONS (ATTIC). BLACK DIAMOND EQUIPMENT: HARNESS. PAOLA LENTI: SEATING, RUG (TERRACE). TAYLOR CREATIVE: SPHERE FIXTURES. COUTURE FOR HOMES: SEATING FABRIC (BALCONY). VITSOE: SHELVING. THROUGHOUT WIEGANO: CUSTOM SLIDE. BRIGHT WINDOW SPECIALISTS: WINDOWS. I.J. PEISER'S SONS: FLOORING. PAINT: BENJAMIN MOORE & CO.

