

housebeautiful

NOVEMBER 2002

America's
Top 100 (plus)
Designers

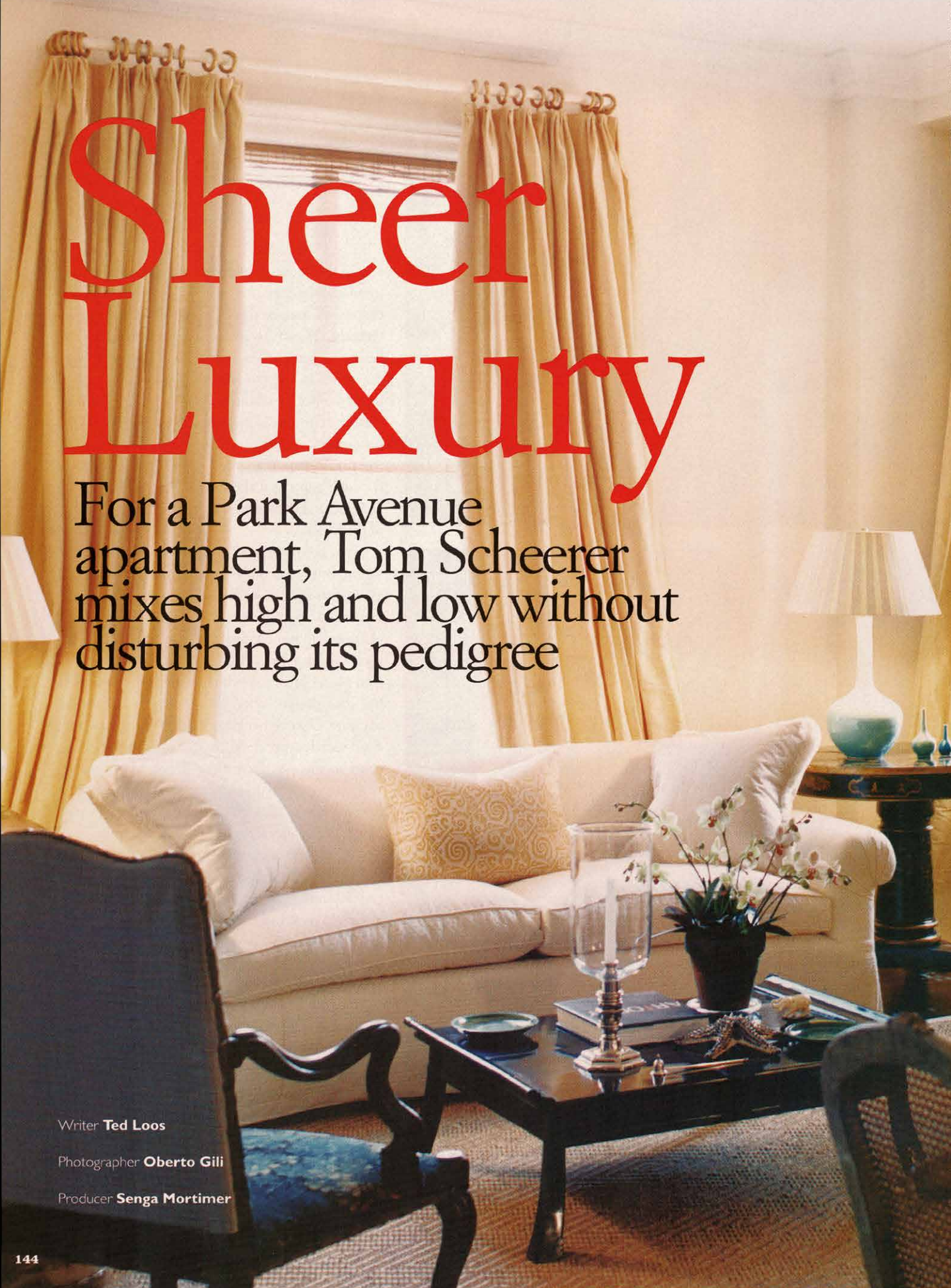
And Their
Inside
Decorating
Tips

Fall Color
For the Table

Chic
Interiors
Coast to
Coast

\$3.95 US/\$4.95 Canada/Foreign





Sheer Luxury

For a Park Avenue apartment, Tom Scheerer mixes high and low without disturbing its pedigree

Writer **Ted Loos**

Photographer **Oberto Gili**

Producer **Senga Mortimer**



ON NEW YORK'S PARK AVENUE, ALL THOSE LIMESTONE and marble façades can be a challenge to a designer: how to see past the neighborhood's formality to create a look that's refined, but still alive. Given a commission in a grand apartment on that famed stretch of real estate, designer Tom Scheerer didn't rattle the beautiful bones of the circa-1910 building. Instead, he emphasized the serenity and courtly elegance of both the space and the owners, a financier and his wife. Scheerer did it not just with 250-year-old antiques, but with bursts of mid-century modern and pieces from Crate & Barrel as well. "I like mixing high and low," says Scheerer.

The designer found himself using more French antiques than usual. "I always listen to the apartment," he says of his site-specific approach, and this project was whispering, "Louis." For the dining room, an 18th-century French console table and an Empire-era cut-crystal chandelier looked right at home. But, Scheerer says, "There's nothing worse than choosing everything at the same level of fanciness," so he decided to

Left and above: Although the now-classic Saarinen dining table is still being made, this one is an early example. The plastic chairs are by Verner Panton from Moss. Below a reproduction mirror stands an 18th-century French marble-topped console table. The Empire chandelier is from Betty Jane Bart Antiques; the new tin sconces are Mexican. The curtains' raw silk is from Jim Thompson.



Above: Circa-1940 ceramic urn-shaped lamps from the Coconut Company stand on oak pedestals designed by Tom Scheerer. **Right:** Lefty, a golden retriever, sits on a Crate & Barrel sofa. The cabinets were designed by architect Peter Moore. An oak picnic table was stained dark brown to harmonize with the Eastlake dining chairs.

install a vintage Eero Saarinen pedestal table right under the chandelier and placed some even more radical Verner Panton chairs of molded plastic around it.

The apartment—two separate abodes that were joined into one—is clearly divided between four main public rooms and five private ones, but Scheerer's talent for pacing smooths the progression between them. "I try to pick up elements from one room that lead to the next," says the designer. "I don't start over with every room." The first thing Scheerer and architect Peter Moore did was restore all the doorways to their original, grand proportions. "I was always trying to stress the verticality of the apartment," says Scheerer, who was thrilled with the 12-foot ceilings. Two tall Louis XVI-style mirrors, one in the living room and one in the dining room, face each other across one of those tall doorways, with two pairs of elongated Mexican sconces serving as exclamation points.

The living and dining rooms are linked by a remarkable vanilla-colored wall finish. It took ten coats of outdoor house paint and many





man-hours to achieve an ultrashiny effect that is new-Porsche perfect. The designer and clients agreed that color should be used sparingly and strategically—in a lampshade, a cushion, a work of art. Where Scheerer thought a strong color was needed, he didn't hang back. The cozy kitchen, which is more like a library with a stove and sink in it, is warmed up by red textiles on the beige sofa. In the dark-brown library, Scheerer used his favorite kind of mid-century abstract art for a color infusion—one of Josef Albers's works entitled *Homage to the Square*. The artist made them in many colors, inadvertently helping decorators with their palettes. "I've done entire projects based on them," says Scheerer. The casual way Scheerer places the Albers on the floor, leaning against a turn-of-the-20th-century Chinese cupboard and next to an 18th-century French chair, is as breezily confident as the designer himself. What could be more Park Avenue? ●

Left: In the dark library, colors glow: a big abstract painting by Katherine Lynch, yellow cushions and lampshades. The sofa is covered in a velvet from *Decorators Walk*; the club chair at left wears Fortuny fabric. **Above:** Josef Albers's *Homage to the Square* is propped on the floor against a Chinese kitchen cupboard (the TV's inside). The Regence chair is covered in Brunschwig & Fils' tiger-print linen.



This view: In a corner of the serene, almost patternless master bedroom stands a 1930s American silvered Oriental-style screen. The far bedside table is from Ralph Lauren Home; the near one was designed by Scheerer. The walls are covered in grasscloth. The canopy is actually "boneless"—just fabric hanging from the ceiling. For more details, see Resources.

one room that lead to the next”