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A HISTORIC HOME WITH MOD PARISIAN FLAIR
& A CHIC SLOPESIDE CHALET



french

Hacin + Associates renovates a historic Beacon Hill residence for a bicontinental couple who favors a modern European aesthetic.

BY MARNI ELYSE KATZ

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TRENT BELL



From top: Edward Augustus Crowninshield, the fourth son of U.S. Secretary of the Navy Benjamin W. Crowninshield, owned the property until 1856; the city views from the rooftop deck are sublime. Opposite page: The homeowners have three pieces by artist El Anatsui, including "Heart of the Matter" in the media room. Charlestown-based Timberguy made the table.

connection



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hen you know, you know. Midway through the process of interviewing architects to renovate their newly purchased four-story Beacon Hill town house, the homeowners hired David Hacin on the spot. “The couple has a very Parisian attitude toward architecture and design,” says Hacin, founding principal and creative director of Boston-based Hacin + Associates. “They understood our approach of celebrating history by contrasting it with moments of modernity.”

Architectural details in this pristine 7,878-square-foot Victorian feature prominently. The house, built circa 1848, was home to Boston Brahmin Edward Augustus Crowninshield, who was known for his exquisite collection of rare books. The front parlor, which overlooks the Public Garden, boasts intricate pressed plaster detailing, stained glass, a handcarved fireplace mantel and an antique chandelier. The current owner plays piano here, beside a stuffed swan from famed

taxidermy house Deyrolle in Paris; it's a cheeky reference to the swan boats across the street. It also ties back to the couple's Paris home, where they spend half the year.

The majority of the work, which revolved around retrofitting certain aspects to better fit the couple's lifestyle, happened at the back of the house. Working with Sea-Dar Construction, Hacin relocated the kitchen from the garden level to the parlor level. The team also added an elevator, which runs up to the third floor (restrictions prevented them from going higher), to alleviate the hike up to the newly expanded roof deck. "It was about transforming a 19th-century house built for 19th-century living, with servants cooking in the basement and sleeping in the attic, into a home for modern family life," says Hacin.

The new open kitchen, which supplanted a butler's pantry, is a sleek and

contemporary arrangement of Bulthaup cabinetry. Its bronzed-toned components have been strategically set amid original wood paneling, some of which remained in place, and some of which was removed and relocated. "The renovation was very surgical," Hacin says.

The overlap of new and old materials intensifies the effect of a modern-day kitchen dropped into a historic shell. The new glass backsplash looks to have been applied directly over the original mahogany paneling, with upper cabinets affixed on top of it. Above, old and new are more subtly differentiated, with new mahogany panels abutting original mahogany coffers.

Contemporary furnishings and artwork quietly enhance the home's architecture. Italian sofas with bronze shells carry champagne tones into the living room, as does the whimsical bronze sculpture by John Koga that the wife describes as "Picasso meets Henry Moore."





From top: In the master bedroom, the Flexform Feel Good chaise lounge from Showroom Boston overlooks the Public Garden; a mahogany cabinet in the foyer with a horsehair-embellished front by Roman Thomas makes use of traditional materials in a contemporary form. “The angles also help ease circulation through the space,” Hacin says. Opposite page, from left: The crisp white paint shows off the parlor mantel, which has been updated with a refurbished mirror; “We wanted the stained glass to be the focus so we repainted the ceiling details white,” says architect David Hacin.



The Ochre chandelier with teardrop crystals alludes to the home’s existing antique chandeliers without emulating them. “We wanted something that complements rather than copies,” says Matthew Woodward, interior designer at Hacin. “It has grandeur and elegance but is clearly contemporary.”

The soothing, neutral palette not only elevates the architecture but also provides the perfect backdrop for the couple’s artwork, most of which they chose or commissioned specifically for these spaces. In the master bedroom, however, the art—a 1730 Japanese screen purchased as one of a pair at an antique fair in Paris—came first. “The room, which is built around the screen, is very sensorial,” Hacin says. The



From top: About choosing the countertop, designer Matthew Woodward says: "We used Silestone in the whitest, purest white we could find in order to keep the champagne cabinetry as standout"; the Holly Hunt table in the dining area has a Macassar ebony top with solid mahogany and bronze base. Opposite page: The homeowners commissioned artist Wendy Artin through Gurari Collection in SoWa to create a pair of monochromatic watercolors for either side of the living room fireplace.

carpet is silk, the bed is leather and the drapes are wool sateen. "It's about the feel of each element and the craftsmanship associated with it, which is very French."

As you move up through the house, it becomes more contemporary. In the fourth-floor media room at the front of the house, a shimmering assemblage made from salvaged alcohol bottle caps and copper wire anchors a simple setup featuring a Poliform sectional, Vitra lounge chairs and a custom salvaged wood table. Just around the corner, in front of the sleek contemporary glass staircase, sits a gargantuan recuperated, polished mahogany root sculpture from Bali.

At the back of the building, Hacin lifted the roof to create an 11-foot-7-inch-high steel-framed glass wall that affords a Mary Poppins view of the city. The concept is based on

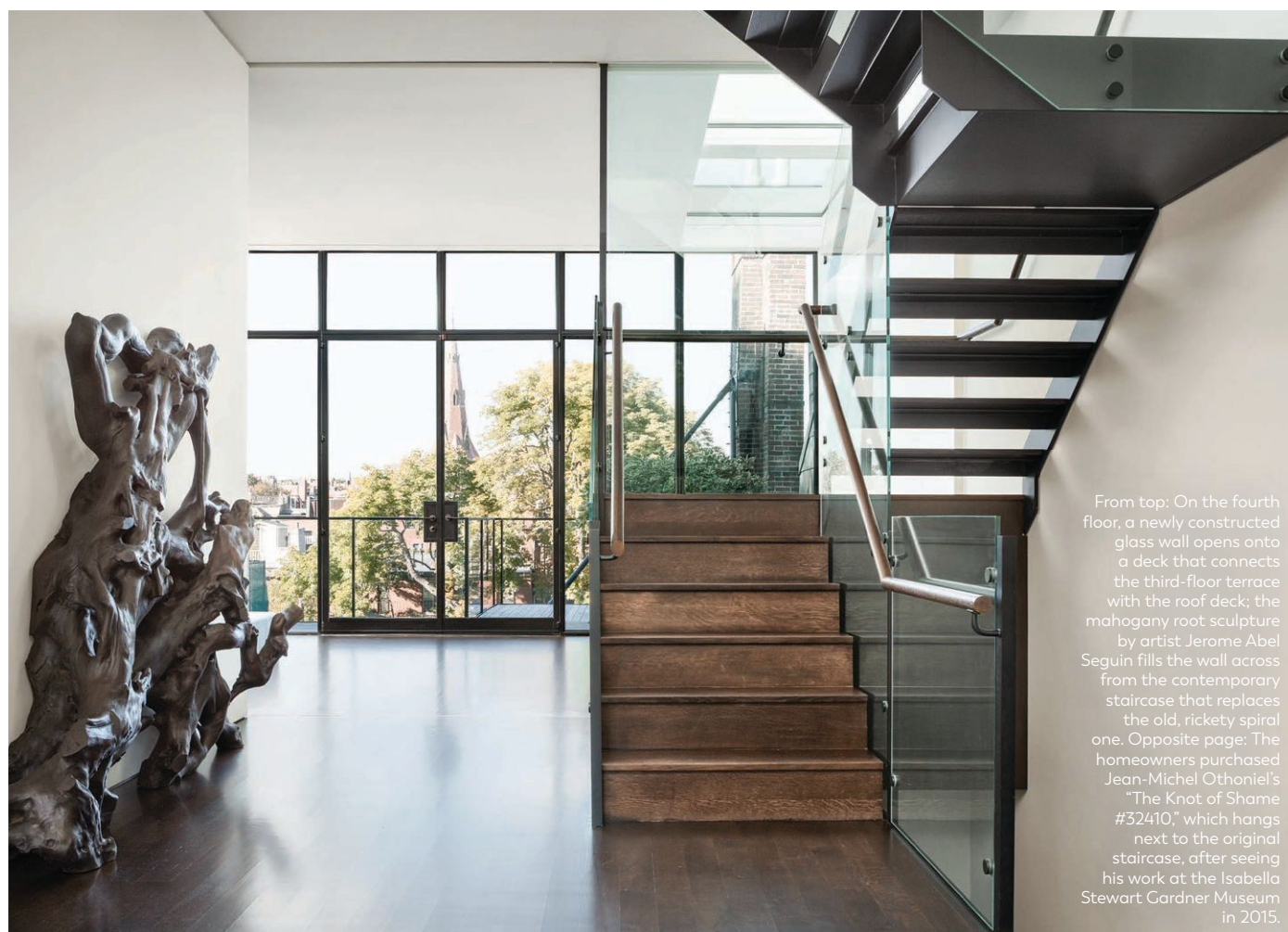






a photo of a greenhouse-like space in the wife's brother's Parisian penthouse. Sky-high single panel French doors open to a series of multilevel outdoor spaces that include a 585-square-foot deck, complete with a gas fireplace and outdoor kitchen, perched on the roof.

It's a dramatic alteration that would normally not have been permitted in Beacon Hill had the building not been fortuitously sited. The back facade is hemmed in by taller buildings on either side and overlooks a private way, so it's inconspicuous from any public streets in the neighborhood. "In Paris, a small contemporary addition would be welcome. Here, it's more complicated," Hacin says. "Like us, the clients see beauty in all of it—the historic and the modern." ■



From top: On the fourth floor, a newly constructed glass wall opens onto a deck that connects the third-floor terrace with the roof deck; the mahogany root sculpture by artist Jerome Abel Seguin fills the wall across from the contemporary staircase that replaces the old, rickety spiral one. Opposite page: The homeowners purchased Jean-Michel Othoniel's "The Knot of Shame #32410," which hangs next to the original staircase, after seeing his work at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in 2015.





design details

TYPE

Single-family residence

LOCATION

Beacon Hill

ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR

DESIGN

Hacin + Associates
hacin.com

BUILDER

Sea-Dar Construction
seadar.com

resources

CIRCA LIGHTING

Master bedroom chandelier
circaighting.com

DEDON

Roof deck furniture
dedon.de; showroomboston.com

DESSIN FOURNIR

Master bedroom nightstands
dessinfournir.com

FORT STREET STUDIO

Area rugs throughout
fortstreetstudio.com

HOLLY HUNT

Dining room table, master bedroom bed, parlor sofa, benches, coffee table
hollyhunt.com

MASTERPIECE WOODWORKS

Living room coffee table
masterpiecewoodworks.com

MINOTTI

Dining room chairs, parlor chair and ottoman
minotti.com

PROMEMORIA

Living room sofas
promemoria.com