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SUTTON PLACE REVIVED

THE COUPLE LOVED, LOVED, LOVED THE BUILDING," enthuses Kevin Lichten. "They had a third child but didn't want to move. They asked if there was anything we could do."

Lichten empathized with their plight. The couple owned a ground-floor apartment in an historic Sutton Place building designed in 1926 by Rosario Candela with Cross and Cross. Lofty windows overlooked terraced lawns and the East River.

Their children could live on the Upper East Side and play on grass! Moving was out of the question.

Lichten changed into his super-architect costume and flew to their rescue. The architecture firm of Lichten Craig is known for

A grass cloth-clad gallery, fitted with a train station lantern and 19th century English pine bench, leads into the tiger maple-panelled kitchen.



Above: Lichten Craig updated the living room by adding a seagrass carpet, taffeta curtain panels with bamboo shades, and modern accessories and art. Below: The boys' room is a study in textures—burlap wall covering, oak furniture, tweed carpet, soft corduroys, and wool tartans.



its careful restorations of historic buildings, but there was only one solution to this couple's plight. "We gutted the apartment end to end and re-scrambled the rooms—except for the living room and library—and squeaked in an extra bedroom," explains Lichten, who came up with the necessary adjustments to the 3,200-square-foot residence. "It was two bedrooms and we made it into three. The master bedroom was vast, so we stole a little space from that and expanded the master bath. We added one child's room, eliminated some poorly configured rooms, redid all the closets, and added a laundry room and children's play room."

The living room was deemed sacrosanct, as it had been last redecorated by McMillen, Inc., "one of New York's great white-glove decorators." The only fundamental change was to give the original paneling a coat of cream glaze. While the husband relished the apartment's history, the wife had a more contemporary sensibility. Joan Craig, who oversees the firm's interior design, was able to combine fashionable shapes and colors with the couple's vintage and antique pieces. "We worked as much as possible with what they had," she says.

Their old sofa was restyled and covered in pale gold fabric. It is flanked by 18th-century-style chairs covered in gold and white Fortuny damask. The trio is gathered around a 19th century ottoman with curvaceous legs and covered in zebra skin. Tiny trays pull out from the sides to support drinks. It was purchased from John Rosselli.

The cobalt blue of the two antique Venetian glass lamps, from Pauline Yeats, is repeated in the slate blue chairs. The room retains



*Above: The kitchen's dining area works equally well for Play-Doh parties and dinner parties, with a chandelier and 19th century French buffet.
Below: The elegant pine-panelled library, accented with tartan patterns, overlooks a lawn leading down to the East River.*



formality while embracing a few fresh ideas. A gilded mirror on one wall faces a contemporary painting on another. The windows looking over the sloping lawn and river are treated as the main event and draped in gold-, blue-, and red-striped taffeta by Cowtan & Tout. "We made window seats where you can look out on the lawn," Craig says. "To me, the most extraordinary thing is that it doesn't feel like New York."

The husband wanted to retain the dark pine paneling of the library, so Craig decorated the room in a distinctly masculine tone using tartans and menswear fabrics from Holland and Sherry. A pair of tufted armchairs are covered in houndstooth check wool, and an antique oriental carpet was laid on the old oak floor. The sofa is covered in soft burgundy fabric, while an air of Old World authority derives from a 19th century English Neo-Gothic chair and a mahogany bench used as a coffee table. A 17th century French Alsatian armoire with spiral moldings, from Amy Perlin Antiques, is topped with blue and white porcelain ginger jars.

The rest of the apartment was radically reconfigured. "He is in finance," says Lichten. "There is a lot of pressure there so he wants to come home and have dinner with his kids at night. They entertain and celebrate holidays at their country house, so he suggested getting rid of the formal dining room."

Lichten was concerned that such a decision could hurt any possible future sale of the apartment and came up with a compromise. "We created a dining room that is connected to part of the kitchen but of a quality commensurate with the rest of the building. Essentially, the kitchen and dining area are one big room divided



Above: The interior of the 17th century antique armoire was outfitted with a removable case holding the television and sound equipment.

Below: Lichten Craig designed a new gallery with substantial moldings and sconces, adding drama and lending a sense of hierarchy.



by an architectural element in the middle. It's paneled, but we chose tiger maple, a lighter wood, so the room seems light and airy. The kitchen cabinets are detailed with recessed panels and molding, but rendered in stainless steel to give a more modern feeling."

Craig surrounded the wooden dining table with high-backed leather chairs with brushed-nickel legs from London Chair. "I think that room is the most compelling instance of taking something tried and true and giving it a twist," she says.

The master bedroom reflects the wife's more spirited taste. Blue and white floral fabrics from Manuel Canovas drape the bed, a color scheme picked up by the bright blue chaise and accented by a fuchsia pillow. The moldings were not built in but painted on the wall by Geoff Howell Studio.

Craig was inspired by the motifs painted by Christian Berard at the Institut Guerlain. "It was a play on the idea of creating a traditional apartment in a more whimsical way," she says.

Thanks to this architectural intervention, the couple now has two bedrooms for their children. The boys' room features burlap on the walls, sturdy industrial carpet, bunk beds with a cowboy motif on the covers, and lots of shelves for toy trains, erector sets, and books. An antler chandelier completes the Peter Pan mystique. The little girl's apartment is in various shades of pink, with a nod to Coco Chanel.

"The husband is very traditional," Craig says. "She wanted something much more relaxed and chic. The trick was to satisfy them both in a building that is traditional in character."

And is the couple satisfied? "Oh, yes." ♦