

# NEW YORK HOME

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FLOWER DISTRICT

# ADVANCED PLACEMENT

FOR DESIGNER DARREN HENAULT, TAILORED TRADITIONAL IS THE ANSWER

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Similar textures and tones in the living room—of the 1930s leather club chair, 19th-century Italian writing desk, and custom brocade sofa—typify the designer's approach to traditional style.



Interior designer Darren Henault likes to call his style "Proustian," a reference to the richly textured rooms the French novelist describes in *Remembrance of Things Past*. Henault's colors of choice are soft and earthy (he uses only Farrow & Ball's clay-based paints); his furniture groupings are a thoughtful mixture of antiques, new pieces, and his own designs.



The result is more pleasingly homey than staunchly traditional. "People actually come to me and say, 'My house needs to be Darrenized,'" he says.

Not too long ago, Henault "Darrenized" his own apartment, a newly converted 1,000-square-foot space in New York City's Flower District. "It was nothing but a big white box," he recalls. The designer embarked on a sweeping three-month redesign, beginning by darkening the living room floors to a walnut shade. "It's not about the floor. It's about the space above the floor," he says, explaining how the richer tone brought depth and dimension to the room. He added crown and base moldings, eradicating the apartment's industrial feel, and had the rooms rewired to hide outlets in the baseboard molding.

Original doors were replaced with custom-designed panels. Henault also enclosed the previously open kitchen area. "I like to live a little formally," he says, "to separate the cooking and eating spaces." He also demarcated the living and dining areas with a screen of glass and ebonized wood. The apartment is filled with pieces from disparate periods that blend well together because of their textures, colors, and patterns. Henault scoured Paris flea markets to find the 1930s leather club chair and Directoire chairs for the living room. A 19th-century Italian writing desk and a new calfskin coffee table join the mix, all softly lit by Edwin Lutyens pendant light fixtures, wired together with silk cord and ornamented with silk tassels. And though the walls are filled with portraits, they are all hung at the same level. "It gives your eyes a chance to rest," he says.

There are no superstar pieces in Henault's apartment, nothing overly ornate, no rococo hiding amid straight lines. "I don't want people to walk into a room and notice one thing," says the designer. "I want them to feel the whole room, and I want them to feel at home." **NYH + see Resource**

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Opposite page: In the dining room, Donghia hemp wallpaper offers a textured background for the portraits of Henault's four horses. Above left: Interior designer Darren Henault. Above: John Roselli wallpaper plays up a chocolate linen-velvet headboard, designed by Henault.