

going



TABLE FOR EIGHT

Handbag designer Monica Zvirner, ABOVE, in a Chloé sequin-and-silk dress, loves to cook for family and friends. RIGHT: African-print chairs by the artist Franz West add vibrancy to the Zvirners' dining room, hung with a wall-size drawing by Toba Khedoori. Details, stores, see In This Issue. Sittings Editor: Miranda Brooks.



Prop styling: Seth Saitan, See Grant.

vertical

New York gallery owner David Zwirner, his wife, Monica, and their three children moved up and down when they traded in their SoHo loft for an East Village brownstone. Robert Sullivan discovers how they've made the house a warm and vivid family home. Photographed by François Halard.



hen a family moves into a new house, and even into an old house made new, there are moments in the course of the first year that confirm the residence

as more than a shelter—moments that prove the house a home. “It takes a year to really groove with a house,” says David Zwirner. This kind of moment comes even in New York City, a place regarded as seasonless by much of the nation. And such a moment occurred on one recent snowy evening, when a last burst of winter (a winter that now seems like ancient history) presented the Zwirner family and their newly renovated East Village brownstone with a gift, a snowstorm.

The Zwirner family consists of Monica, who is, with Lucy Wallace Eustice, co-owner and mastermind of MZ Wallace, the handbag company, and David, who is the owner and mastermind of the Chelsea-based David Zwirner gallery. On the shortlist of every contemporary-art collector, the gallery is as international as it is progressive, as serious and painterly as it is conceptual and humorous in the work it shows. Naturally, the gallery is a presence in the new home, though, to everyone’s great credit, the home doesn’t feel like an outpost of the David Zwirner gallery. It feels like a place where the Zwirners, who love living with art, happen to live. “It’s really meant to work for us,” says David.

Fifteen years before this wintry afternoon, the Zwirners began their married life in an apartment in Hamburg, Germany, a home Monica still remembers fondly. “It was inspiring in the simplicity of the detailing there,” she says. “That was kind of a German turn-of-the-century or Austrian aesthetic that we definitely felt we wanted to get a piece of here, without it looking fake.” For the past fourteen winters the Zwirners have been based in SoHo, in what was once a quiet urban landscape, lightly decorated with artists and their lofts, and is now a forest thick with retail stores. As the Zwirner children—Lucas, now fourteen; Marlene, twelve; and Johanna, seven—were progressing toward teenagedom, the Zwirners became interested in more room, as well as more rooms. Thus, they looked at town houses. “The idea of living on different levels wasn’t alien

to us, and I knew that I liked it and wanted more of it rather than less of it—and as many doors as possible,” Monica says.

The couple looked forever, realized that they could easily keep looking forever—at any given moment, a large percentage of New York is looking for a place to live rather than just living—and at last they found a house in the East Village, on a block that was founded when Thomas Cole began painting, falling apart when Andy Warhol was hitting his stride, and now, thanks in part to the Zwirners, is itself returning. It strikes a note of side-street serenity in the midst of everyday urbanity, just a few minutes’ walk from the Union Square Farmers’ Market, where Monica spends most of her spare time. The Farmers’ Market, on that snowy Monday, supplied the organic beef and winter root vegetables that were combined to make a simple cold day’s meal, a stew.

“I love to cook,” says Monica.

“Monica is one of those people who, if we’re supposed to



TEAMWORK

“I was very involved in space and Monica was very involved in detail, and we’re rarely in disagreement,” says David Zwirner. Chloé cobalt-blue dress. Details, stores, see In This Issue.

have dinner together, I always hope that instead of going out, we’ll eat at her house,” says Annabelle Selldorf, the architect of the Zwirners’ home, as well as the Zwirners’ galleries and handbag stores. (Selldorf just designed the latest MZ Wallace store in Tokyo, where one tote in particular, which looks as though it’s made of flame-retardant material, is very hot.) Coincidentally, Selldorf, who also designed the renovation of the Neue Galerie in Manhattan, grew up in Cologne, where David lived until he was seventeen in a home built by his family that was also an art gallery. (In Cologne, Zwirner’s father showed Donald Judd and Warhol early, as well as Magritte and Dubuffet.)

Selldorf distinctly remembers the moment when the vision for the rebuilding of the town house was announced. It was when Monica brought up what would become the kitchen, then a disused room full of boxes and broken glass that resembled the Stan Douglas photo of the crumbling theater in Cuba that now hangs near the Zwirners’ front door.

“I have this fantasy about the kitchen,” declared Monica at the time. “I want it to be incredibly cozy.”

As a result, one all but enters the house through the kitchen, beckoned inside by long oak planks, past the photos by Thomas Ruff, past the deconstructed home collaged by Gordon Matta-Clark, the artist who famously cut apart and out and around actual buildings and homes. Itself a terrarium of warm city light, the kitchen also features an actual terrarium, by Paula Hayes, the artist who also designed the wild

The classic New York town house can be dark;
a redesign can be aesthetically cold, but here is a home that is so
full of light, so elegantly detailed as to feel open and warm

HOME AND HEARTH

An English mantel
frames the
fireplace. Works
by On Kawara,
who shows in
Zwirner's gallery,
hang on either side.
The portrait is
by Francis Picabia.

OCT.21.1986



FEB. 1



CARRY ON

Marlene, twelve, and Johanna, seven, pass a photograph by Thomas Ruff in the entrance hall, toting MZ Wallace bags.



SOMETHING WILD

A zebra-skin rug grounds the airy, light living room.



CHEF'S SPECIAL

Monica prepares a winter stew. "I want it to be incredibly cozy," she says of the kitchen.



OF THIS EARTH

Terrarium by Paula Hayes.



RHYTHM NATION

Marlene keeps the beat beside a Raymond Pettibon drawing.



SPICE OF LUXURY

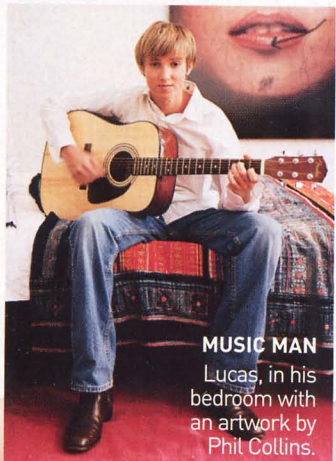
A wooden cold tub, and marble walls in the master bathroom and sauna.



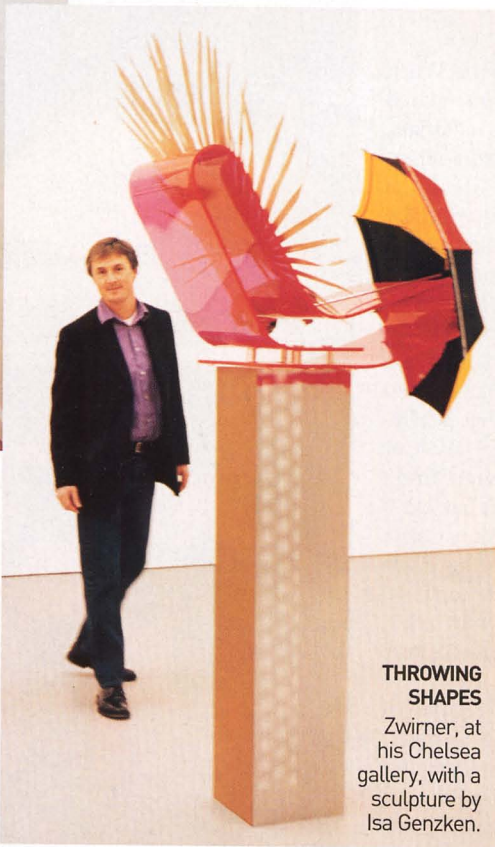
Details - see in the book

LET THERE BE LIGHT

The stairway is illuminated by a skylight designed by Annabelle Selldorf, the architect of the house.



MUSIC MAN
Lucas, in his bedroom with an artwork by Phil Collins.



THROWING SHAPES

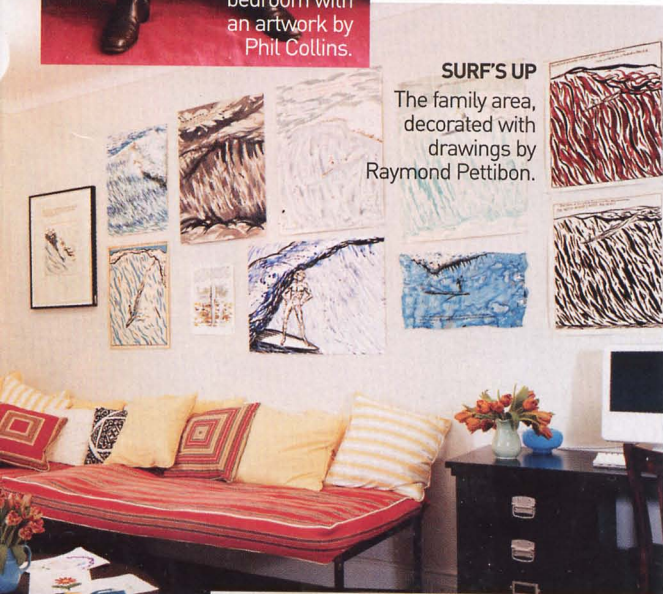
Zwirner, at his Chelsea gallery, with a sculpture by Isa Genzken.

blueberry-filled garden, a sunken terrace surrounded by honeysuckle and newly planted maple trees. Even while dinner is cooked on a winter afternoon, the great achievement of the redesign is evident: The classic New York town house can be dark; the usual redesigned town house can be aesthetically cold, but here is a home that is so full of light, so elegantly detailed as to feel open, warm. Or cozy, if you like, starting with the kitchen, the command-and-control center, which features a working hearth adorned with Johanna's drawings, a stone-tiled floor the soft color of the prairie, and a wide-open pantry—the height of luxury for Monica, as well as the place to store her jars of home-pickled preserves and homemade granola. "I keep trying to get the kids to do it," she says. "But I get David to keep me company, a glass of wine. . . . It's going to be a late night."

On that snowy afternoon, the Zwirners were around all day—Monday, a gallerist's day off, being stay-at-home-day for the adults and thus a big day for the kitchen. The Zwirners talked with their son, who was thinking about choosing a high school; they drank perfect green tea. Monica being an enthusiastically particular tea drinker (the tea is from Upton's in Boston, the wooden tea timer from Japan). They imagined

SURF'S UP

The family area, decorated with drawings by Raymond Pettibon.



the stew. They also took a swim, downstairs, in the pool, which is notable, first, in that it is a stationary lap pool (the swimmers swim into an engine-generated stream); second, because it is one of the few double stationary lap pools in existence; and third, because the pool room is done with Moroccan tile bought through a Frenchman in L.A. and installed by a Portuguese craftsman—you feel like you're standing inside a Gerhard Richter painting. "I said, 'I want every color in any pattern; just don't repeat it,'" says Monica.

a

fter the swim, Monica and David worked their way upstairs. The parlor floor is where the piano is kept. David plays a little, though his expertise is drums; he came to New York in the eighties with hopes of being the next jazz-fusion drummer but ended up

going back to Germany to work in the music business, a time when he began collecting art on his own. "I had this interest in art that was dormant for all those years," he says. In the study, Jockum Nordström's collage portrait of a group of musicians hangs over the picture-frame fireplace, shipped, like all the mantels, via art crate from a dealer in England. On that Monday, David listened to a little Miles Davis, a little Bebel Gilberto, and then, in the living room, beneath a dreamscape by Neo Rauch, perhaps Germany's preeminent painter at the moment, the youngest Zwirner played piano. As the ivories were tickled, the white of the snow fell outside the wall of windows, and On Kawara's paintings quietly marked dates past. The dining room was empty but not necessarily quiet: Toba Khedoori's wall-size painting is wry but austere, like a choral work, the line drawing of a chain-link fence filling the white space like notes in a hushed stone church. The backdrop is

THE NEW GUARD

A painting by the German artist Neo Rauch hangs in the parlor.



PERSONAL TOUCHES

A metallic MZ Wallace clutch.

African-print chairs, by Franz West. Monica loves fabric. When she was growing up on the Upper West Side, her parents adored African art, now a new touch of old home. "I love materials, and I think it was all about materials that were sort of inherently beautiful," she says.

Meanwhile, as the snow increased, there were whispers in the town house of the season's last chance of snow-canceled school. Lucas retired for some time with his guitar, a Gibson SG, taking up residence in a room also hosting a portrait of Dylan by Raymond Pettibon, of Kurt Cobain by Elizabeth Peyton, and a photograph by Phil Collins (no relation to the singer) of a giant, graffiti-scrawled poster of Britney Spears—public enemy number one for an acoustic-guitar-toting teenager who has just finished reading Bob's *Chronicles*, and who listens to the music of his grandparents. ("My mother had Cream albums," says David.) Marlene, meanwhile, played drums. "I try to help her out," says David. In the center of everything, a family common area, a place for computers, for a relaxing daybed, for the surfing drawings of Pettibon. It's a stroke of urban planning to keep kids' computers in a zone of human interaction. It was Monica's idea, and so impresses David. "And it seems totally common sense: You don't want them to hole up in their rooms," he says.

And then through all these rooms is this grand column of waning light, the centerpiece of the house that is mostly space: the stairway. The skylight at the top is an illuminated nautilus, breathing the late winter afternoon's luminescence into the home, and the stairway is the airy core of the building. Designing was a lot of work for the architect and the client, according to Selldorf. "They were really into it," she says. "They weren't lazy. They were willing to stretch their minds." It is framed by a railing that seems wrought in a Shaker village. "We spent a lot of time on that," Monica recalls. Monica nodded to David's choice of color for the walls, an off-white he'd loved in the nineteenth century Antwerp home of Luc Tuymans. "I was very involved in space, and Monica was very involved in detail, and we're rarely in disagreement," David says.

So that afternoon, Monica and David had one of those yes-this-is-our-home moments, a shelter-oriented epiphany. It was after swimming and just before dinner. It was moments after their sauna in the marbled bathroom. It was on the fourth floor, where the high ceilings have old wooden beams exposed, a Bavarian farmhouse glimpsed through the otherwise modern interior. After David and Monica had bundled up, they passed through their bedroom and sat out on the stone deck, on the chaises, snow-bathing. They were red-skinned and warm outside in the cold snow. They looked into the snowy sky together. "I have this thing about snow," says Monica. It was like a weekend away—until dinner, anyway. Then, after all the various forms of music, they went to bed to read, facing the Dutch beachscape, an early Mondrian, and looking last on a dreamy light-filled abstract by Raoul De Keyser. The artist is in his 70s now and treasured by David, who ends up looking at this master's work most of all these days. "I just think it is so elegant," he says. They read until the snow was really kicking in, in love with their new old town house.

When he travels to Europe the following week, David calls back to New York, missing his new place. "It's really nice to be home in that house," David says. □

For the pool room, "I said I want



TAKING THE PLUNGE

Lucas and Johanna swim in the basement's Moroccan-tiled lap pool. In this story, hair and makeup, Timothy Johnson for Privé Salon NYC/Utopia.

every color in every pattern; just don't repeat it," says Monica

