



one enters." It was the only apartment in the building with such substantial windows and, even better, Romualdez was permitted to replace the existing glass with floor-to-ceiling panes that immediately endow the rooms with a contemporary spirit. And the vantage point on a low floor gives a feeling, he says, that "you are floating on the river, constantly looking at the water, as opposed to across to Long Island or Queens. Here you are so conscious of the river and the boat traffic, which is very dynamic; it inspired me to stay calm in terms of the decorating."

Which is not to say he didn't have his work cut out for him. Romualdez first encountered what he calls a "Tuscan fantasy" concocted by the previous owners, including "orange stucco Venetian walls that looked like they belonged in an Italian restaurant." The sprawling apartment was completely gutted, and the floor plan was reconfigured to better define the entry, expand the kitchen, and create a breakfast area from what had been a pantry. Upstairs, a new master bath, dressing

room, and office were carved out of existing bedrooms. A floating stair was installed to link the two floors.

Once the plan was established and the renovations were under way, Romualdez turned his focus to the decor: "I see a space, and within minutes it tells me what to do, and my mind is speeding. Next, I try to get inside my client's head. It is my goal to try to mesh her taste and style with what the apartment wants to be. If there is a happy marriage, then you have a successful job."

The happy marriage here was based on rigor. In the living area, the dark-stained wide-plank oak floors are set off by a single color and a single fabric, a pale linen used throughout—on the pair of swiveling club chairs that channel Jean-Michel Frank, on the banquettes flanking the fireplace that were inspired by Billy Baldwin slipper chairs, and on the classic-lined sofa. "I had the guts to keep it that simple because the room had scale and high ceilings," the designer says. "In the original Jean-Michel Frank interiors that inspire so