



BALANCING ACT

WITH THE HUDSON RIVER AS A BACKDROP, RITA SCHRAGER'S
SUN-DRENCHED MANHATTAN LOFT SETS
THE STAGE FOR DRAMA, MIXING MODERN CLASSICS AND QUIRKY FINDS

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stage Saarinen Tulip chairs by Knoll
and a 1950s aluminum-antler chair in
dining room. Facing page, from left:
wall of the family room is paneled in
cassia ebony; the 1950s cocktail table
by T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbings. In the
kitchen, Kong polished-aluminum stools
by Emeco, a stainless-steel hood from
Broan, and a cooktop and a wall
panel by Viking. See Resources.







From top: Schragger found the dressing area's etched-mirror vanity at a Paris flea market; the curtains are of a Lelièvre fabric from Old World Weavers, and the Victorian slipper chair is covered in Cavallini cowhide by Edelman Leather. Murano-glass lamps and a faux-fur throw in Ava's bedroom. An installation made of sheet metal from old cars by Cuban artist Damian Aquiles and a circa-1997 watercolor portrait of Schragger by Francesco Clemente in the gallery. Facing page: A 19th-century Anglo-Indian bed and an antique Indian cabinet in Schragger's bedroom; the curtains are of Margot silk fabric by the Silk Trading Co. See Resources.

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friend, who worked with Vicente Wolf before going out on his own six years ago. "Rita asked for a place that was glamorous but fun at the same time," says de la Portilla. "So we used a lot of pieces from the '30s to the '50s, lots of faux fur and Ultrasuede and silks. I didn't want to get bogged down by the architecture. And I felt it should be a bit intimate, not seem like the lobby of a Schragger hotel." There was one exception, however. "I kept trying to figure out what kind of furniture wouldn't block the view when you walk in," Schragger recalls. "And then I saw it in one of Ian's lobbies—a bed. I definitely copied that. And now whenever I give a dinner, two or three people end up lounging there."

The girls chose the colors for their bedrooms: a soft pink for Ava and a pale blue for Sophia. A pass-through between them allows for flashlight games in the night. Schragger's bedroom is more dramatic, swathed in bloodred silk, with a gold-leafed bath and a dressing area. She found a mirrored vanity at a Paris flea market and transformed a column next to it into an homage to matadors. "I love bullfighters, baby," she laughs. "I'll marry one anytime." ■



A FLOOR ACTS as a dancer's support, the still point for her pirouettes and the springboard from which she leaps into the sky. So it is appropriate that the one throughout Rita Schragers new Manhattan apartment is both strong—made of end-on-end pieces of Douglas fir—and pretty. The color of aged piano keys, the floor bounces and reflects the abundant sunlight that pours in off the Hudson River through the endless walls of windows.

It has been more than a decade since Schragers danced with New York City Ballet, but the Cuban-born beauty hasn't lost her lithe dancer's build, the athletic grace that propels her, or her flair for the theatrical. She came to the city from Miami at 15 to dance, and later joined the ballet company. In 1992, during her last season, she met renowned hotelier and man-about-town Ian Schragers. They were married that year, and have two daughters, Sophia, 10, and Ava, 7 (named for the silver-screen beauties). Though separated, the couple remain "really good friends," she says. So when Schragers wanted to create a home for herself and her children downtown, it made sense that she would look for a space as dramatic as any stage set—or any of Ian's hotels.

Schragers bought the apartment, which is located in one of a pair of West Village towers designed by Richard Meier, while it was still a construction site. "My broker took me up when there was nothing but concrete, no glass at all, and it was wide open," she says. "That was it. I loved it right away." But the 3,600-square-foot raw space was not without its challenges. To maintain the focus on the drop-dead views of the river and the setting sun, Schragers wanted to be sure not to break up the living space

with walls. That meant visitors would have to pass by the bedrooms upon entering. "I didn't know what to do with that hallway," she says.

Luckily, she had access to Ian Schragers architects and designers, who have worked on such monuments to style as the Royalton in Manhattan, L.A.'s Mondrian, and the Delano in Miami. And Andrei, president of design for Schragers hotels, admits she was hesitant to tackle this job, and not just because of Meiers august pedigree.

"It's much easier to do commercial work," Andrei says. "It's a totally different thing to try to figure out what someone wants personally. I would never have done it if it hadn't been for Rita." Working with fellow architect Tim Andreas, Andrei established a layout in which a wide white gallery with a coffered ceiling ends in a wall of dark, richly figured macassar ebony that frames the sky beyond. Visitors are irresistibly drawn toward the light, without ever quite realizing that they are walking by three bedrooms (with doors that are discreetly recessed).

Schragers other stipulations were few. "The girls' rooms had to be the same size so that they wouldn't fight, and I needed to be able to hang out in the living room with friends without bothering the girls when they were in their rooms." In other words, the apartment had to acknowledge her status as a single woman as much as it did her role as a mother. Her ultimate requirement was more atmospheric than practical: "I wanted it to be like a loft," and in that she has succeeded. But this is clearly a Hollywood set designer's version, not some artists garret.

To furnish the space, she enlisted the help of interior designer Gabriel de la Portilla, the brother of a

Facing page: At Rita Schragers' West Village loft, designed by Gabriel de la Portilla, the living room's vintage Harvey Propper sofa and a 1950s armchair, both from 20th Century Gallery, flank a 1930s iron-and-glass cocktail table; the 1940s gilt-bamboo floor lamp is from Newel Art Galleries. This page: A 19th-century Chinese opium bed from ABC Carpet & Home is outfitted with a mattress covered in Bowser cotton by the Silk Trading Co. See Resources.





Clockwise from top right: A Paolo Rizzatto lamp by Flos is mounted above a Hudson stainless-steel table from Nuovo Melodrom and a Lucite bench by Plexi-Craft; the vintage abstract folk art is from Blackman Cruz. In the bathroom, a shower curtain of Clarence House's Vortice fabric. Shimmer Screen ball-chain curtains frame the sleeping area; the linens are by Frette, and the coverlet is by Ann Gish from Stella. The vintage Bertoia chair was bought at auction; the acrylic book tower is a Coleman design. See Resources.

