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*asian infusion*

*On Beacon Hill, designer Jeffrey Delvy nips and tucks a classic brownstone by injecting a hint of Far East sophistication. BY BRIGID SWEENEY // PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTIAN KOZOWYK*





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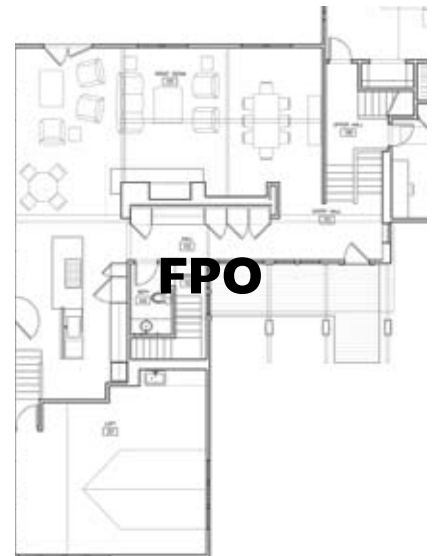
**A YOUNG FAMILY'S BEACON HILL** condo may be the last place you'd expect to find an abundance of 17th and 18th century Asian art. But after you step off the cobblestone street and ride the cage elevator to the third floor, the traditional brownstone façade reveals an antiques-packed interior with decidedly Imperialist flavor.

The home's Far East accents—from the dining room's framed 18th century Chinese wallpaper panels to the ceramic dogs who now reside in the master bedroom after years standing sentry outside a Beijing house—are the calling card of Back Bay architect and designer Jeffrey Delvy, a longtime collector of early American antiques. His affair with the Asian decorative arts blossomed after purchasing a set of colonial-era blue and white porcelain dishes on Beacon Hill. "The china was the everyday pattern used by the first five U.S. Presidents," Delvy explains, "but it's actually a Cantonese pattern." Thus began an enduring fascination with the 18th century China trade

period, when animal skins departed Boston Harbor for Guangzhou, where they traded for tea, silk, and porcelain.

As fate would have it, Delvy's former colleague, a newlywed who had recently purchased this three-story penthouse off Charles Street, shared his love of Asian art. A Boston native blessed with an antique-dealing grandmother, she'd inherited an enviable array of European Art Deco furniture, plus several Japanese pieces brought back by her grandfather after World War II. She wanted to incorporate the antiques into a décor that paid homage to family history without turning the home into an overly solemn museum.

By capitalizing on the unexpected Art Deco-Asian combination, Delvy was able to integrate the heirlooms and still maintain a contemporary energy. The key to creating a modern family home, he says, is to keep things slightly off-kilter. Take, for example, the family room, where an antique gold leaf Japanese screen sits above a kid-friendly



Above, the home's plan. Below, from left, a gable creates a dining and kitchen area; Marcus







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Mitchell-Gold sofa covered in an inexpensive Williams + Sonoma Home tan velour. “We didn’t want the décor to be too precious, because kids would be jumping on the furniture,” says Delvy, “but we also wanted the family pieces to be prominently displayed.” The screen, which shows up in many of the wife’s childhood snapshots, is now the backdrop to a new generation of family photos starring the couple’s one-year-old daughter.

Nearby, the juxtapositions continue: Black Chinese chests dating to the 1920s hold the TV and electronics, offset by a Swiss Art Deco painting of Adam and Eve (“their hair colors match the owners’ perfectly,” Delvy notes), lamps that were picked up in Maine, and a 1960s Sputnik chandelier the husband found in California.

Many of the home’s newly acquired pieces hail from nearby businesses, as Delvy spent the year-long renovation period scouring antiques shops on Charles and Newbury Street for accessories that embraced the world while

remaining firmly rooted in local history. The finds, including Cantonese porcelain from Polly Latham Asian Art & Antiques and a 1920s Chinese rug from Marcoz Antiques, meld with the family pieces to create an inviting mix of tradition and modernity that manages to seem both timeless and fresh.

Upstairs, Delvy removed a wall that separated the original servants’ quarters to create the husband’s office. A French 1930s desk from Brookline’s Antiquers III, a mirrored coffee table from a 1970s department store, and Ralph Lauren chrome bookcases, commingle with what he describes as a “very traditional gentleman’s sort of Chesterfield sofa” and an oriental rug.

Down the hall, the guest room’s traditional colonial theme—complete with a blue-and-white star-sprinkled duvet on an antique bed discovered on the North Shore—is complemented by persimmon drapery printed in gold with the Chinese symbol for happiness and a single wall papered in a pattern depicting 19th century Chinese village

life. The room’s closet was cut down in order to redo the staircase up to the roof deck. Once a perilously narrow spiral, the new stairs can accommodate people laden with children, glassware, and trays of food. A beautiful hanging wood screen in the stairwell, designed by the project contractor’s son, subtly reinforces the Asian theme while also obscuring the adjacent bathroom.

Visitors need only a glimpse of the roofdeck view, spanning the Esplanade’s Hatch Shell on one side and the State House’s golden dome on the other, to understand why the family eats there from April through October. As one of the tallest buildings on the block, the brownstone offers a very “king of the world” rooftop vibe, which Delvy accentuated with an ipé wood deck edged with mahogany to delineate the dining and living areas, overstuffed Restoration Hardware

**ARCHITECT** Gleysteen Design,  
**CAMBRIDGE CONTRACTOR** David Brookes  
 Construction, Lexington



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## TRADE SECRETS

INSIDER TIPS ON WHAT MAKES THIS SPACE GREAT

**1. OUTSIDE IN** Eight-foot-wide glass doors off the kitchen open onto a two-tiered brick patio garden. Linking the formerly dead space to the kitchen gave it purpose. The garden also serves as a second entry from the parking lot, and the family can bring groceries and strollers in through the adjacent mudroom.

**2. SERENITY NOW** The master bedroom walls are covered in sound-absorbing Italian silk. As a result, the room has become a sweet retreat. "It's where we go to give ourselves a timeout," says Elizabeth.

**3. HIS AND HERS** Peter and Elizabeth each have their own generous walk-in closet, plus an additional spare cedar closet. The couple admit that while they doubled their living area in their new home, they've "expanded like a sponge to fit the space."

**4. TOUGH LOVE** Every surface in the kitchen was chosen for durability, from honed granite countertops to wide plank floors to a blackboard-covered refrigerator.

**5. CASE STUDY** Oak paneling on the walls and ceiling make Peter's study distinctly masculine. The space doubles as a media room and has a deck—an ideal game day setup.

**6. FAMILY ROOM** A wide walkway, a big pantry, and plenty of barstools mean there's ample space for everyone in the kitchen.

**7. GRAND INSPIRATION** The new staircase off the parlor was modeled after the one in the guesthouse at the Breakers, the Vanderbilt family's famous Newport, Rhode Island, mansion.



