

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF FINE INTERIOR DESIGN

APRIL 1985 \$4.50







Cultural Exchange

Artful Ensemble in a New York Townhouse

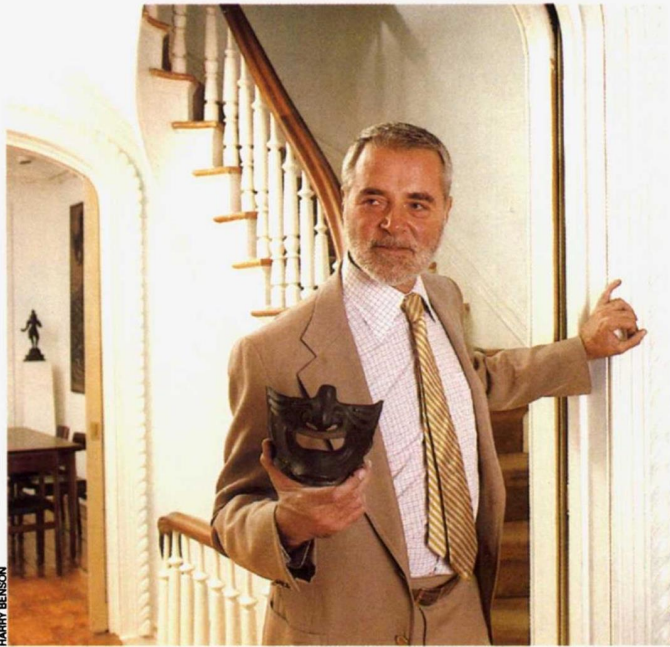
ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN
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Refurbished by architect Edward F. Knowles, an 1850s Manhattan townhouse is now a fitting complement to the owner's wide-ranging collection of art and antiques. ABOVE AND LEFT: Displayed against a pristine chimneypiece, the portrait by American artist Ammi Phillips commands immediate attention in the entrance hall. A strong presence nearby is a 17th-century still life, *The Fish Stall*, by Frans Snyders. The painting anchors a seating area composed of an antique settee and wing chair, a Shan drum and a Tiffany smoking table.

AN ALL-WHITE Charles Hinman painting counterpoints a somber lead relief by Jasper Johns. A jar made of iridescent Roman glass shares space—and a curving fullness—with the clay figure of a T'ang horse. "It is difficult to know exactly why one is drawn to a certain piece," says the New York collector who assembled these objects, "but I'm certain of one thing. I have never acquired any work of art just to fill a gap in my collection. If an artwork speaks powerfully for itself, if it speaks to me, then I feel certain it will harmonize with the other objects here"—*here* being the three-story, nineteenth-century Manhattan townhouse

“To collect is to enter into a conversation that reaches from culture to culture.”



HARRY BENSON

RIGHT: An affinity for form, from the figures in a Cheyenne painting, circa 1880, to the spare lines of Ming Dynasty armchairs, shapes the character of the sitting room. The small artwork is by Odilon Redon.

Lamp by Koch & Lowy. ABOVE: After restoring the architectural integrity of the interiors, Mr. Knowles tackled the disposition of the collection. “The house is in permanent transition,” he explains. “The owner is always looking for fresh ways to juxtapose pieces that have grown familiar.” The architect holds a bronze Japanese helmet.

redesigned for the owner by architect Edward F. Knowles.

The Fish Stall, an immense still life by the seventeenth-century master Frans Snyders, is found at the foot of the curving stairway. Says the owner, “I took a risk by putting *The Fish Stall* right at the entrance to the house. One might assume that the hallway wouldn’t provide enough room. But Ed Knowles helped a great deal with these decisions. He saw how the painting would open up the space.” In the sitting room, a Cheyenne painting on linen has a similarly expansive effect. “I was powerfully attracted to this image,” continues the owner. “It has the aura of the cave paintings at Lascaux.” Also presiding over the entrance are a pair of Japanese bronze fawns, their limbs as delicate and their heads as alert as those of the Cheyenne horses.

“Several factors make it possible for this astonishing variety of objects to get along with such ease,” says Edward Knowles. “First of all, this is a superbly proportioned interior, dating from a time when a sense of spatial comfort was second nature to architects. And the owner is acutely responsive to questions of scale. The larger objects in the







