

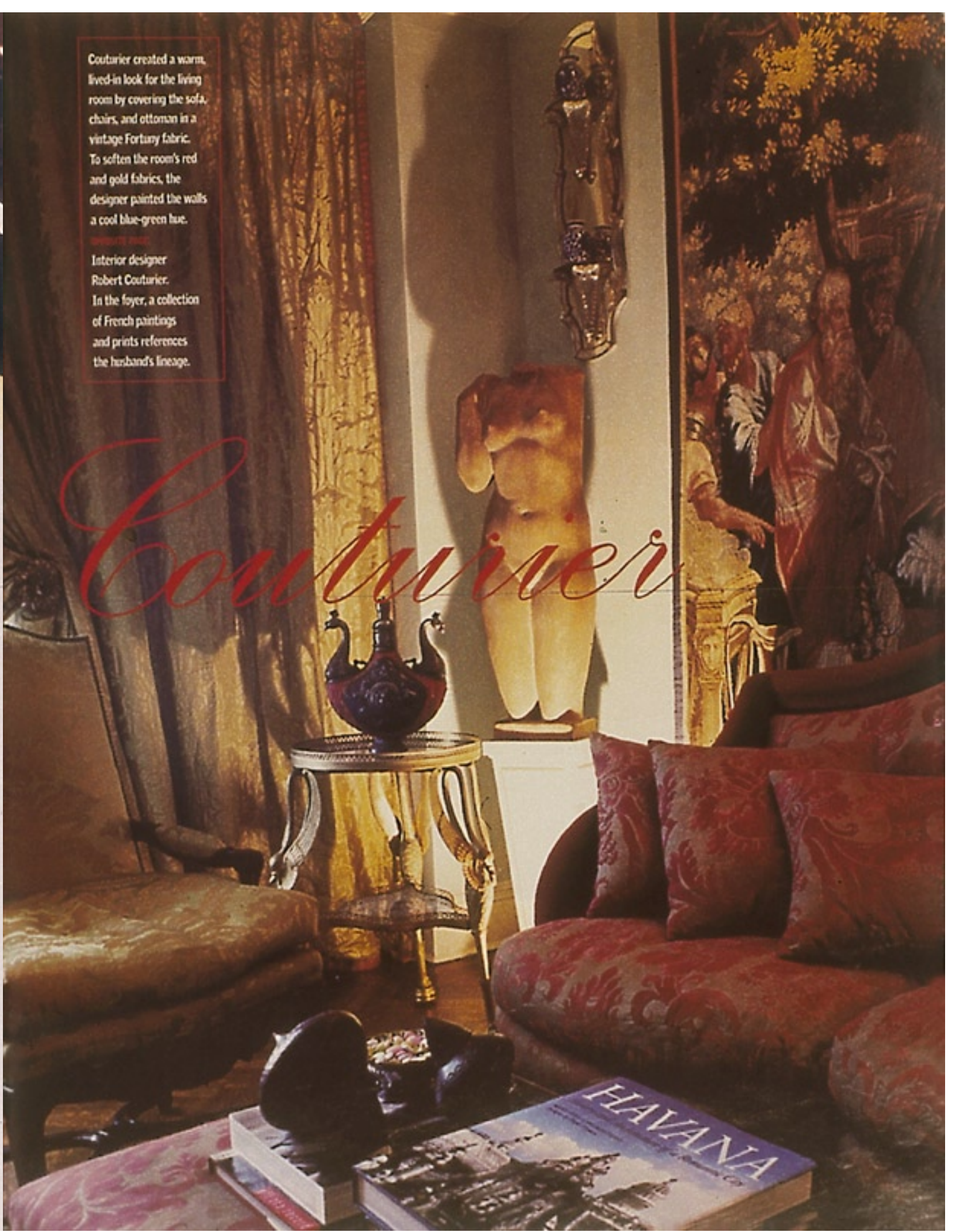


OLD WORLD FURNISHINGS BESTOW
 A LIVED-IN, GRAND BUT COMFORTABLE
 GLAMOUR TO A STUNNING
 MANHATTAN PIED-À-TERRÉ.
 DESIGNED BY NOTED INTERIORS
 MASTER ROBERT COUTURIER.
 PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAWRENCE VETUGALID
 PORTRAIT BY JEFF FASANO

There's more to decorating a house than just filling rooms with furniture," says Paris-born, New York-based designer Robert Couturier. "The important thing is the presence of imagination." Take for example this classic Madison Avenue pied-à-terre, a study in Old World style, which Couturier crafted from a classic 3,000-square-foot prewar for a socially prominent New York couple whom he demurely declines to name, as he does any of his legion of loyal worldwide clients.

Couturier created a warm, lived-in look for the living room by covering the sofa, chairs, and ottoman in a vintage Fortuny fabric. To soften the room's red and gold fabrics, the designer painted the walls a cool blue-green hue.

Interior designer Robert Couturier. In the foyer, a collection of French paintings and prints references the husband's lineage.



Haute Couturier



An eclectic mix of vintage fabrics

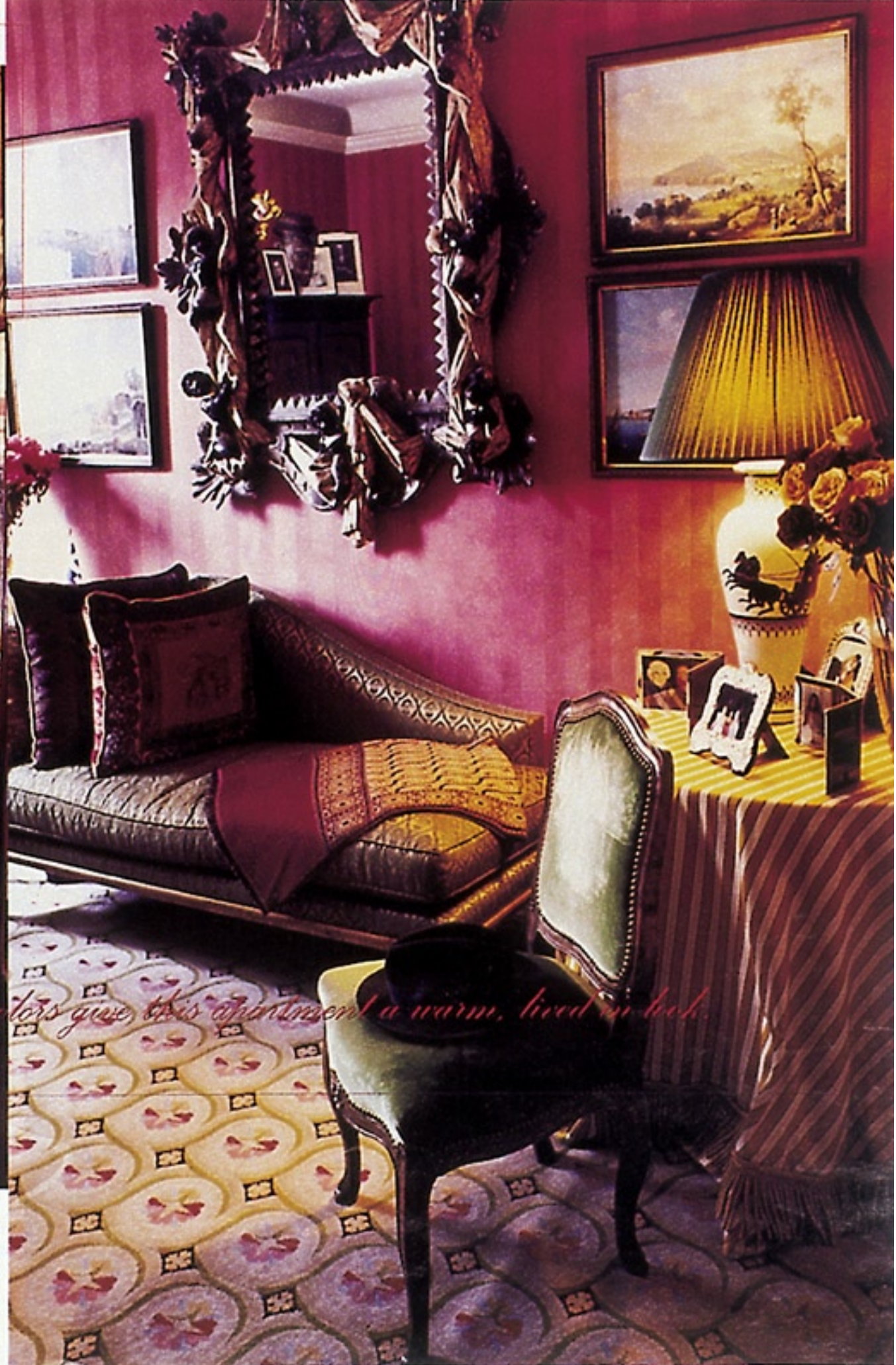
What he will say about this couple, but only because it's important to the story, is that they were starting over. "This was his second marriage and her first," Couturier explains. As a result, they didn't have much to work with. "They moved in with a sofa and their suitcases, that was it."



European antique and folk

Without so much as a single stick of furniture to spark an idea, Couturier delved into his clients' past lives for inspiration. She's Greek, by way of Turkey, a "bubbly sort of lady who likes to entertain and have fun." He's half French and "enjoys clean, classic spaces and furnishings that have a history." Both back-

Flexible seating allows the apartment's many rooms to be used for a multitude of functions. OPPOSITE PAGE: The living room's eclectic mix of furnishings includes a seventeenth-century Dutch mirror. To accentuate the front hall's black and white marble floor, Couturier painted the walls a warm



paint colors give this apartment a warm, lived-in look.



I enjoy the juxtaposition of elements from different time periods and places. It makes for a more interesting story.

To give the dining room an informal feel, Couturier furnished the space with sofas and side chairs.

ABOVE:
A pair of nineteenth-century French side chairs are a perfect fit for the dining room's small center table.

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Greek icons and European antiques displayed throughout the house are a nod to the couple's heritage.

grounds figured prominently in the final design of the space—a look Couturier refers to as oriental eclecticism, a mix of classic European art and antiques.

For the most part, Couturier was given free rein over the apartment. The only caveat imposed on him by the wife was that he not demolish any walls or rework the layout. "Co-op boards can be so difficult to deal with," he says. "They wanted the project done in a couple of months, not a year or two."

To that end, Couturier perfected a precise design plan. First, he collected fabric swatches, paint samples, and had all approved by both husband and wife. Then he scoured antique shops and markets, both here and abroad, for the right mix of Old World furnishings. When he found something he liked, it was photographed and sent to his clients for approval. "She was concerned with comfort and he was concerned with authenticity," says Couturier. "Getting just the right mix made things interesting."

The planning and procuring continued at a steady pace throughout the winter and early spring. When summer arrived and the couple left on their annual two-month holiday abroad, Couturier and his team moved in to work their magic. One by one, each of the apartment's all-white rooms came to life with color. The entrance hall was painted red, the living room blue, and the dining room gold. "Some people feel comfortable in an environment where everything is white," Couturier says. "But this couple, especially the wife, likes things warm and cozy." The one exception was the master bedroom, which the designer purposely left white. "The absence of color makes it feel serene and restful," he explains.

In a nod to the wife's informal nature, both living room and dining room are interchangeable. Instead of a massive table for 20, the dining room, like the living room, is furnished with sofas and other soft seating. "For dinner parties, she simply sets up several



An antique Syrian mother-of-pearl table and matching mirror brighten the all-white room.

OPPOSITE PAGE: To give the master bedroom a relaxed look, Couturier bathed the room in a mix of cool, creamy whites.



The one room where I like to use white is a bedroom.

small tables depending on how many guests there will be," says the designer. "For an apartment of this style it's very atypical, but that's what makes things interesting."

To accentuate the apartment's eclectic lived-in look, Couturier upholstered the living room sofas and side chairs in antique silk damask from Fortuny. "It gives these classic pieces a more comfortable feeling," he

says. "Like they've been handed down from one generation to the next."

Of course the real test of success came when the clients returned to the fully furnished apartment with everything from furniture to family photos perfectly arranged. "They walked through the front door and immediately you could tell that they felt at home," he says. "For any designer, that's the best compliment of all." |G|

It's such a calm, peaceful color.

