



red hot
MEN'S FASHION FALL 2008
The actor Javier Bardem



GREIGE ANATOMY

WHEN TWO HEADSTRONG STABLEMATES RENOVATE — ONE A MINIMALIST, THE OTHER A TRADITIONALIST — SOPHISTICATION WINS BY A NOSE.

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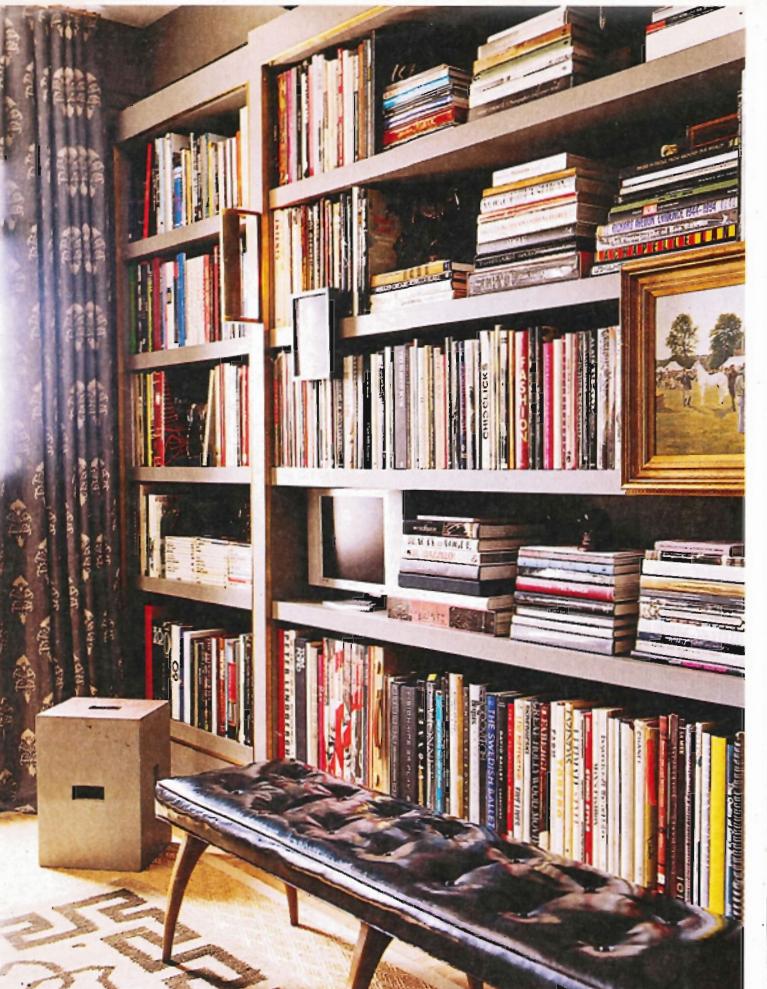
Francisco Costa is walking me through the Midtown apartment he shares with his longtime companion, the horse trainer and manager John De Stefano, with a combination of pride and apprehension that brings to mind a jockey parading his charge in the mounting yard before a race.

"As you can see," says Costa, the women's-wear designer at Calvin Klein, suddenly grinning as we enter the ultramodern kitchen that is dominated by a feature wall of photographs of Andy Warhol in drag, "this is a horse trainer's house, not a fashion designer's."

"Yeah, right," jokes De Stefano, who has just flown in from a yearling sale in Kentucky. "I'm surprised I'm even allowed to live here, let alone have any of my pieces scattered around the place." In truth, the couple's two-bedroom, 1,400-square-foot pad is a reflection of both their tastes, a masculine middle ground that reins in everything from aggressively modernist artworks to nonthreatening animal bronzes. "I would hope it combines our

Above: an Indonesian screen is the centerpiece of the living room, which also includes a Texas longhorn chair. Opposite: the horse photograph was a gift from Bergdorf Goodman's Linda Fargo. The bed linen? Calvin Klein Home, naturally.





Personal effects

Above, from left: a midcentury bench shares pride of place with the books and bronzes in the den; two Enrico Castellani artworks hang over a card table in the bedroom. Opposite: flush doors conceal the master bathroom (top right) and a bar (bottom left); a detail from the guest bathroom (top left); a pastoral painting and two concrete Modernist stools (bottom right) sum up the apartment's dualism.

interests," Costa says. "We're not done yet and it's been almost nine months — a real labor of love."

When the couple decided to renovate the apartment, which they bought three years ago, they were adamant about three things: they would not hire a professional (though they did occasionally seek guidance from a decorator friend, Mark Cunningham); the décor would be a million miles removed from the chintziness of their previous apartment ("It was very English countryside, very Colefax & Fowler," De Stefano says); and the place would not feel in any way transient.

"It really was a quest to find things that suggested a permanence to our lives," Costa says. "But I think that's the fun part, making the place feel like it belongs to us. We wanted every single piece to remind us of somebody or something or sometime in our lives."

In order to realize their take on gentlemanly restraint, they first had to make some structural changes. Doorways to the living room and bathroom were lined up, creating sightlines that give the illusion of more space. Given Costa's allergy to clutter, the doors to the wardrobes and pantries were made flush with the walls, concealing them in the process, and the light fixtures and speakers were similarly recessed. When the metal frames on the windows were stripped back, the rivets became more noticeable, which in turn influenced the couple's subsequent acquisitions.

"As soon as I saw the hardware on the window frames," Costa says, "I decided to echo that throughout, which explains the visible screws on the picture frames in the apartment and" — he points to an oversize Belgian cabinet in the living room — "the rivets on this piece, which I just love."

Then, on a reconnaissance mission uptown, Costa noticed an Indonesian batik screen that had previously caught his eye, at the Horst estate sale. "I had wanted it so much at the time, but I couldn't afford it, I couldn't go near it," Costa recalls. "Horst had taken a series of pictures of Chanel and wouldn't accept payment from her. So she sent him a box of this amazing painted textile, and he made screens out of it. Aesthetically I really loved it, especially the darkness and geometrical lines, so it became the starting point."

With the centerpiece in place, Costa set about adding his designer touch to the rest of the apartment. For the main hallway, he chose a gray-green color for the walls — "It's very wintery, but I liked how grounded and masculine it feels" — and had the wood floors done in a chevron pattern that resembles herringbone. (For the rest of the space, he used sisal rugs and a gray linen-blend wallpaper.) The sofas in the living room and the den were custom-made, as were the cashmere Roman shades and the ingeniously hinged picture frames in the hallway to the den that showcase a rotating selection of photos of family and friends.

"Francisco did all the hard work," De Stefano says. "My biggest contribution, and I doubt Francisco would call it that, was to insist on the giant flat-screen TV in the bedroom, which was not negotiable. To me the process of picking out colors and fabrics and 20 different fillings for a couch is tedious. When it comes to judgment on that kind of stuff, I defer to him. As we say in horse racing, give a horse its head and hope it ends up a winner." ■

