

# Sunny side up

| By Saxon Henry |

[ Natural light and **sunlit hues**  
*infuse* a classic townhouse  
with *fresh-faced* charm. ]



Before taking a visual tour of this Manhattan residence designed by Long Island-based architect Sussan Lari, you might be of the opinion that classic style is old-fashioned. By the time you pass through the entryway, however, you would probably concede that when orchestrated by Lari's playful spirit, classic takes on a youthful appeal. Everything except the front façade of this landmarked townhouse – one of four identical buildings resting side-by-side – sprang from the imaginations of Lari and her client, a young professional who wanted a home he could grow into as he married and had children. The façade is all that remains of the original structure.

Thanks to an open floor plan and to Lari's fascination with natural light, the surprisingly narrow home – only 16 feet wide – feels spacious and airy. "It's really hard to believe that it's so narrow," says the architect. "I designed each space to have a feeling of transparency so that there is always a view beyond. I did this by keeping movement in mind – not just the movement of people but the movement of the view from one area to the next."





The first and second floors hold the spaces in which the client entertains, and because he enjoys cooking, Lari made the kitchen the heart of the first floor overlooking the garden. "Each floor is long and narrow, so there was a risk that the spaces would appear too large," Lari remarks. She prevented this by using subtle tricks, such as separating some spaces with low walls and creating two seating areas on the second floor that are separated by a built-in bar area.

Lari paid special attention to the interconnection between the first and second floors, providing a loft-like feel to the larger upstairs seating area, which is nestled next to a fireplace, by leaving it open to the breakfast room below. The arched aperture is a commanding focal point on one side of the room while the more intimate seating area on the opposite side is arranged around a bank of French doors that march along the front façade. "I pay tremendous attention to natural light and to fresh air when I design a home," Lari says. "I think this helps me to achieve a sense of coziness without the feeling of being confined."





The third floor holds a set of guest bedroom suites and the fourth floor is the master bedroom suite. In order to make the master bedroom feel spacious, Lari put the door on the third floor at the bottom of the flight of stairs leading up to the roomy space. Then, as is the case in every room in the home, Lari chose furnishings that produce interplays of light and dark. This contrast can be seen in the main living spaces in the pert wall colors and crisp white moldings juxtaposed against warm wood grains, and richly colored carpets and fabrics in a painterly mix of patterns.

Though she will always draw the style of a project from her clients' wishes – in this case a sprightly classicism – when it comes to detailing, Lari admits that she will push the envelope a bit





regardless of a homeowner's stylistic preferences. "I will try to bring more subtlety to a project if the client wants a great deal of detail," she explains. "If they are set on minimalism, I will put just enough detail in the interiors to keep them from being stark."

Texture is a key ingredient in the success of the personable spaces in this particular home. In the kitchen, the tile is flecked with a corner motif that adds charm to the space. It's also tile in the master bathroom that creates a visual tactility. "I love tile," says Lari. "It's where I have the most fun. I think I achieve the most playfulness with it and I feel good in the rooms in which I've used it."

It's also in the spa-like master bathroom where Lari's talent for creating a chiaroscuro of light and dark elements becomes strikingly apparent. "I have to have contrast in each space," she explains. "In this room in particular, the warm tones of the furniture brought a classical language to the space but in a modern sense."

These subtleties bring a welcoming sensuality to Lari's work for good reason. "I like that this home feels happy, that it feels like home," she says. "I left corporate architecture to do residential at the height of my career because I didn't feel that we were seeing enough of a sense of home. It's such a joy for me to feel that when I walk through my projects now!" 

