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Tea Cozy
An inviting corner of Jim and Alina Apteker's Brookline Victorian.

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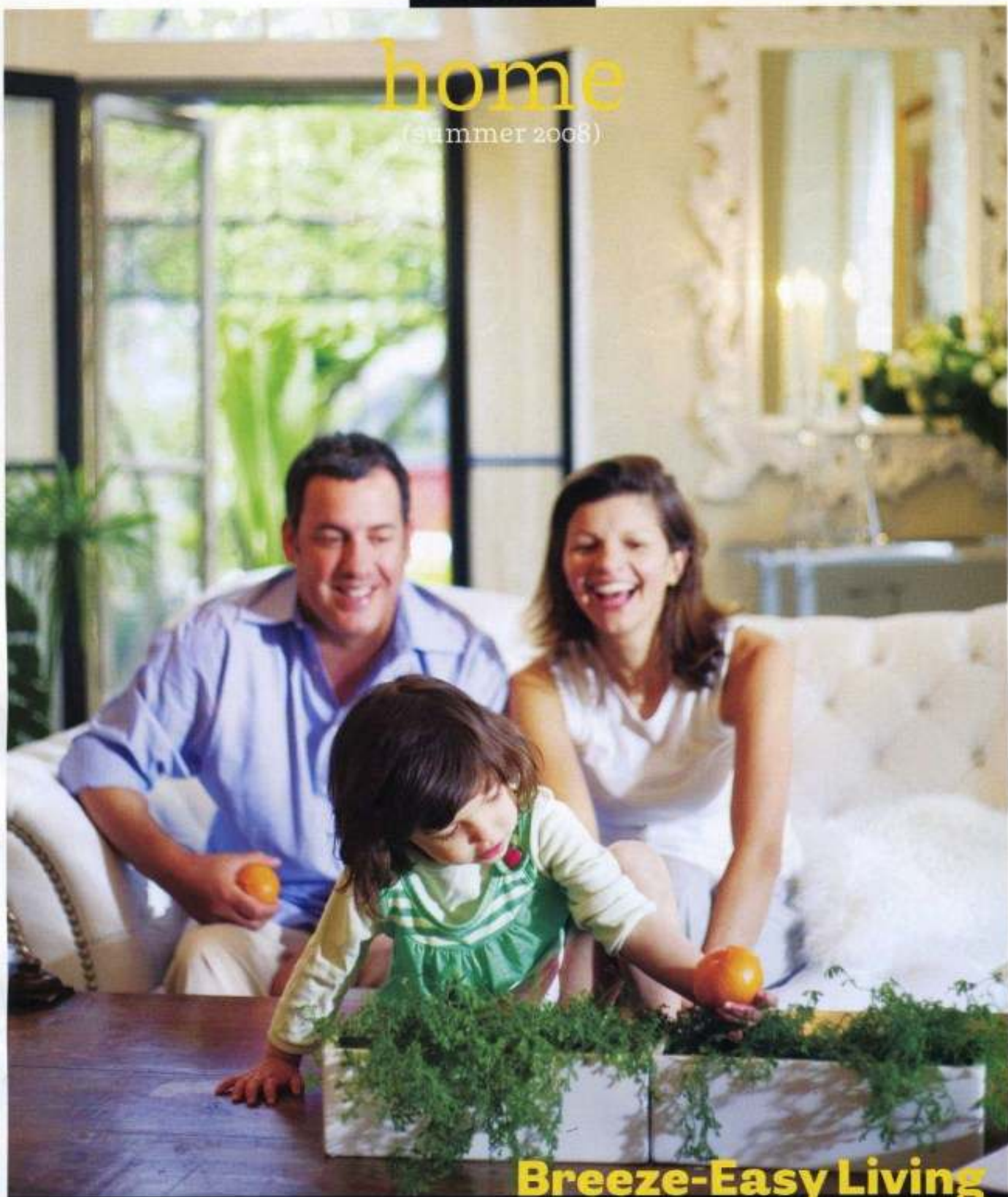
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(summer 2008)



Breeze-Easy Living

Open your home to summer's splendor.

FAMILY MATTERS

Jim and Alina Apteker, with daughter Aniela, entertain in their newly renovated Brookline home, page 84.

A photograph of a Victorian-style living room. The room features a white fireplace with a dark wood surround and a stack of firewood to the left. A white armchair with a yellow cushion sits near a white ornate mirror. A white chandelier hangs from the ceiling. A white chair with a tufted back is in the foreground. A painting hangs on the wall above the fireplace. The room is decorated with a white rug and a dark wood coffee table.

all dressed up

Two of the city's top hosts transform their Brookline Victorian into an inviting showcase.

BY BRUCE IRVING
PHOTOGRAPHS BY BOB O'CONNOR



Jim and Alina Apteker's aptly named White Room features a curvy Ralph Lauren sofa, baroque accents, and a faux fur rug by Landry & Arcari.

IT'S EASY TO SEE HOW JIM AND Alina Apteker have built their company, Longwood Events, into one of the area's premier private-function groups. Ever the perfect hosts, they usher this visitor into their Brookline home, and after handing over a cup of coffee, Alina offers a phrase to describe the design of her home. "Organic glamour," she says, explaining its geode-like qualities—natural on the outside, yet unexpectedly dazzling on the inside.

When the Aptekers bought the house in 2004, it was a survivor: a single-family home on a half-acre in a neighborhood well populated by apartment buildings. Built by the abolitionist and philanthropist Amos Adams Lawrence in 1865 as a wedding present for his daughter, it had seen only three previous owners. But its beautiful brickwork had been obscured by gray paint, and the grounds had gone to seed.

The Aptekers hired Boston architect Carlos Salib and agreed that the correct—rather, the *hospitable*—thing to do was to return to the neighborhood one of its first and grandest citizens. Working with builder Moshe Sagi of Brookline, the gray paint came off, the slate and copper gutters were restored, and Salib designed a kitchen rear addition that repeated the main house's brickwork, dentils, and stone lintels in every way, though on a slightly smaller scale. After nearly two years, the grounds are lush, the brick walls glow in the sun, and the wood trim gleams a lustrous black. In short, the house looks as good as it did on the day it was born, an important part of the neighborhood's history.

Having fulfilled their civic duty, the Aptekers turned to the task of pleasing their guests and themselves. Because their day (and night) jobs revolve around elegant spaces like the State Room in downtown Boston, Brookline's Veronique, and Belle Mer in Newport, glamour



Alina wanted her family room to feel low-key and organic. To achieve the look, she chose tree-patterned wallpaper and a huge tufted ottoman.



would dictate the interior design. They removed the walls from a cluster of Victorian rooms to achieve an unobstructed view through the house to a light-filled contemporary kitchen by Moda Cucina.

To the right of the entrance hall is what Alina calls the White Room, a brilliant, white living room that glows against the dark brown floor. Tucked around the corner is Jim's office, a masculine space of burlap walls, chrome curtain rods, and a palette of blues. ("I suggested that," says Alina, "because blue is the color of success.") A small room nearby that once held the kitchen is now rechristened the Orangerie, a whimsical dining spot with sheer orange curtains and one of the most offbeat uses of plastic boxwood. Typically used for commercial spaces where a touch of "green" is needed, here it lines the walls, 2 inches deep and charmingly kitsch.

But the new kitchen is the main event—the 18-by-20-foot heart of the house of a son of restaurateurs. Jim's parents, Eli and Lily, worked long and hard at the original Veronique Restaurant in Coolidge Corner, and Jim grew up in the business. He and Alina entertain regularly, and they know that no matter what temptations the house may hold—including a well-stocked wine cellar and cigar room in the finished basement—guests inevitably congregate in the kitchen. People gather around the 6½-by-8-foot marble slab ("the biggest we could get," says Salib), surrounded by a beverage fridge and a wood-burning EarthStone pizza oven that Jim really knows how to use. Beyond the French doors is a large patio with a big Viking grill that sometimes gets people into the glorious backyard. A green oasis, it's attractive to all sorts of creatures, including a flock of wild turkeys that occasionally visits from the Fens.



Even the most hospitable people need downtime, though, and the second floor is where Jim, Alina, and their young daughter, Aniela, head when the party's over. Upstairs, the dark floors change to white, but the open plan continues. The master suite is deep and wide, and begins with a 7-foot-deep day bed surrounded by walls of synthetic animal skin in a pattern called Bambi. Through a black string curtain is the bedroom, which flows into a marble bathroom with few

walls and lots of big mirrors. In the walk-in closet sits what Alina calls "the single greatest appliance in the house": a Jiffy clothes steamer.

Before I leave, Jim picks up on my interest in wine and offers me a tip. "Put the dishwasher on low temp and don't use detergent," he suggests gently. "The glasses will still get clean but there won't be any residue." I consider this advice a wonderful gift from someone who knows both sides of the glamour equation. ■

The Aptekers bought wine racks that show the labels (so they know what they have) from wineenthusiast.com. Below left, an exterior view of the Brookline home.

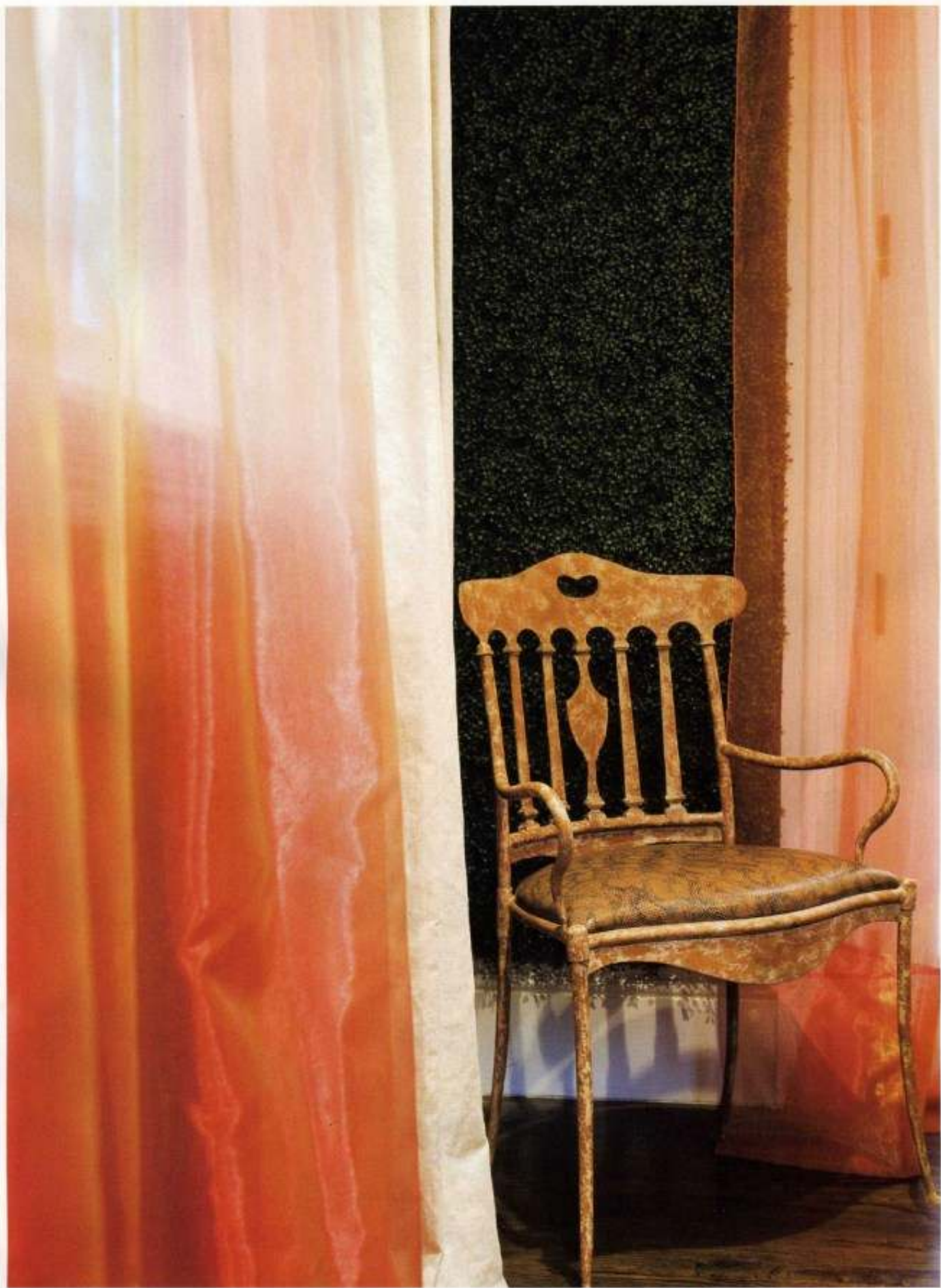


Consummate entertainers, the Aptekers put the brick pizza oven in their marble-accented kitchen to frequent use.



Without a formal dining room, the Aptekers use this space, dubbed the Orangerie, for informal meals and tea. Opposite, an antique chair in front of the room's plastic-hedged wall.

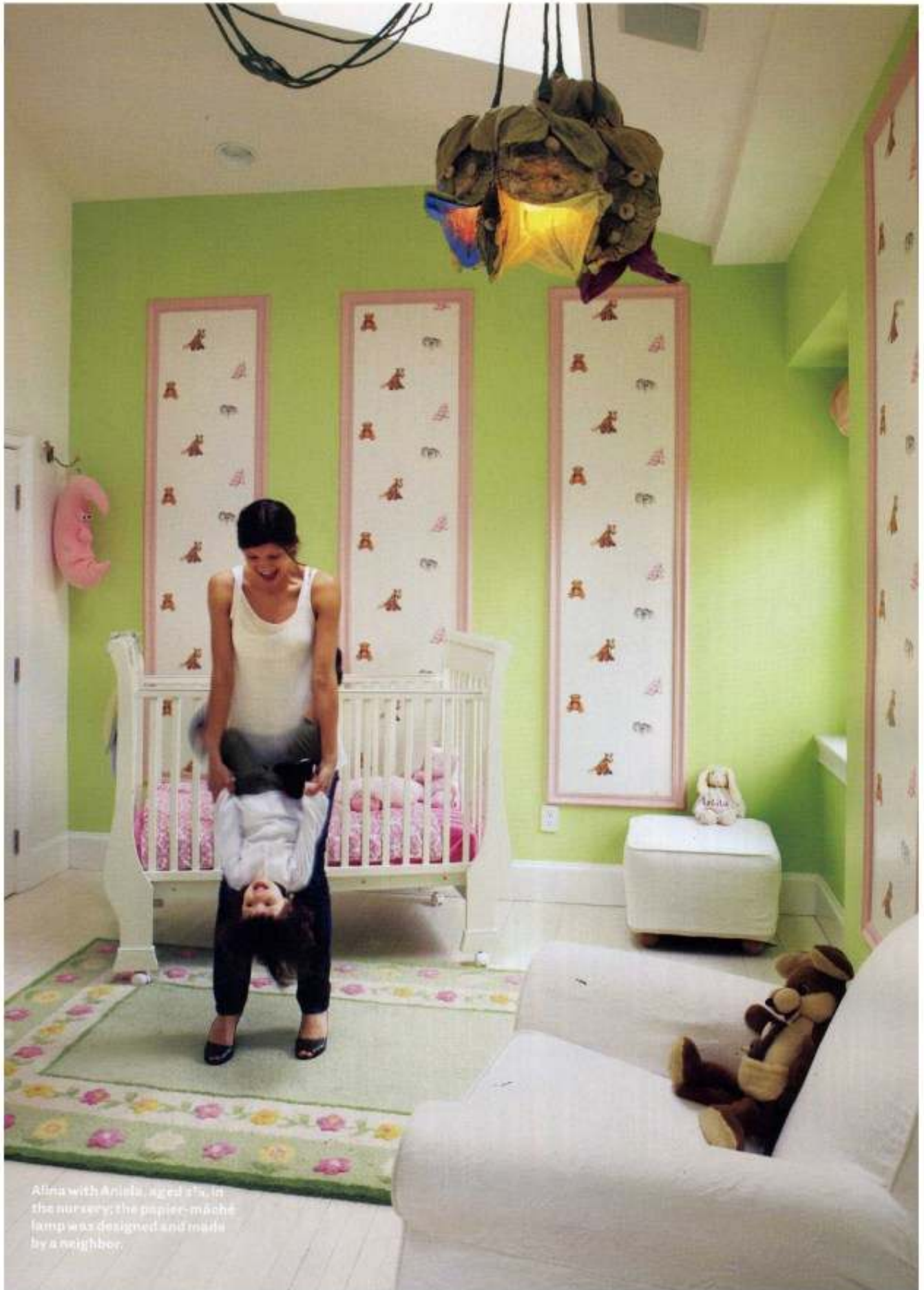




Adjacent to the master bedroom is a lounge in faux fur by Robert Allen, the perfect place for an afternoon nap. Ribbons mimic 1970s bead curtains, creating privacy between the spaces.







Alina with Aniela, aged 3½, in the nursery; the papier-mâché lamp was designed and made by a neighbor.



Left, the white marble bathroom features a tub by Wet of Canada. Right, a chair from the Andrew Martin showroom in New York sits in front of an Oly mirror. Below, the plan reveals large, open spaces perfectly proportioned for entertaining while cooking, both indoors and out.

