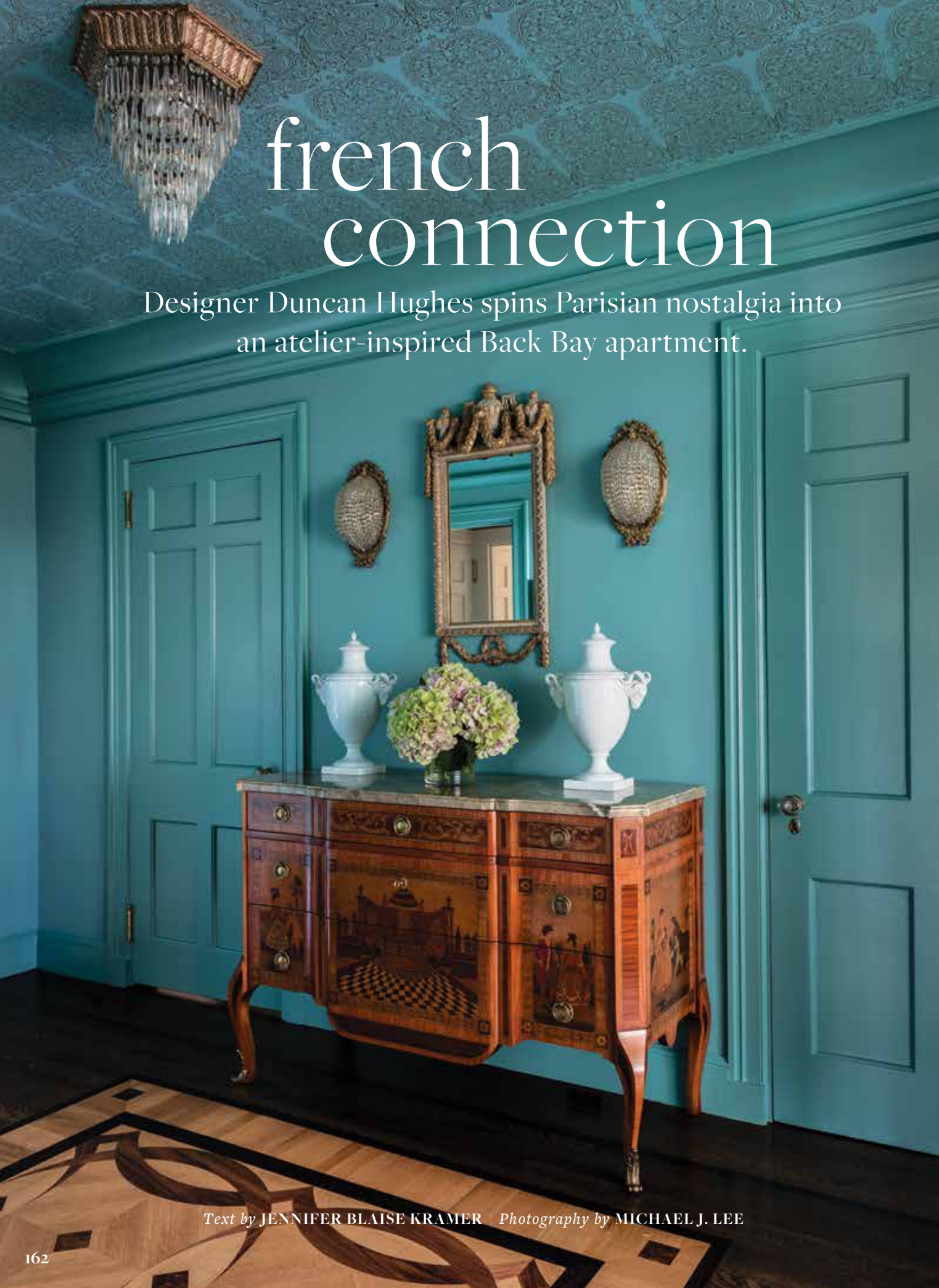


french connection

Designer Duncan Hughes spins Parisian nostalgia into an atelier-inspired Back Bay apartment.



Text by JENNIFER BLAISE KRAMER | Photography by MICHAEL J. LEE



French doors, painted the same lush Farrow & Ball Sugar Bag Light as the rest of the foyer, lead to the living room. **FACING PAGE:** A Cole & Son wallcovering on the foyer's ceiling coordinates with the aqua-blue wall color. Stained oak, natural maple, and walnut comprise the inlay floor.



The living room boasts a very French seating configuration with scattered, informal velvet chairs and sofas that can be rearranged to accommodate entertaining in the style of a Parisian salon.

Newport, Rhode Island, residents Linda Sawyer and John Harris craved a weekend pied-à-terre with Boston character and French flair. When they found a penthouse apartment on Back Bay's Marlborough Street, they fell for the prime location, the private elevator, and the rooftop deck with 360-degree views of the city and room for the dogs to play. The second they closed on the residence, the couple called their designer. Duncan Hughes had thoughtfully reworked their Rhode Island house, and they needed his eye to rethink their dated 90s-era Boston interiors. Their one request? Give it a French spin, without going over the top.



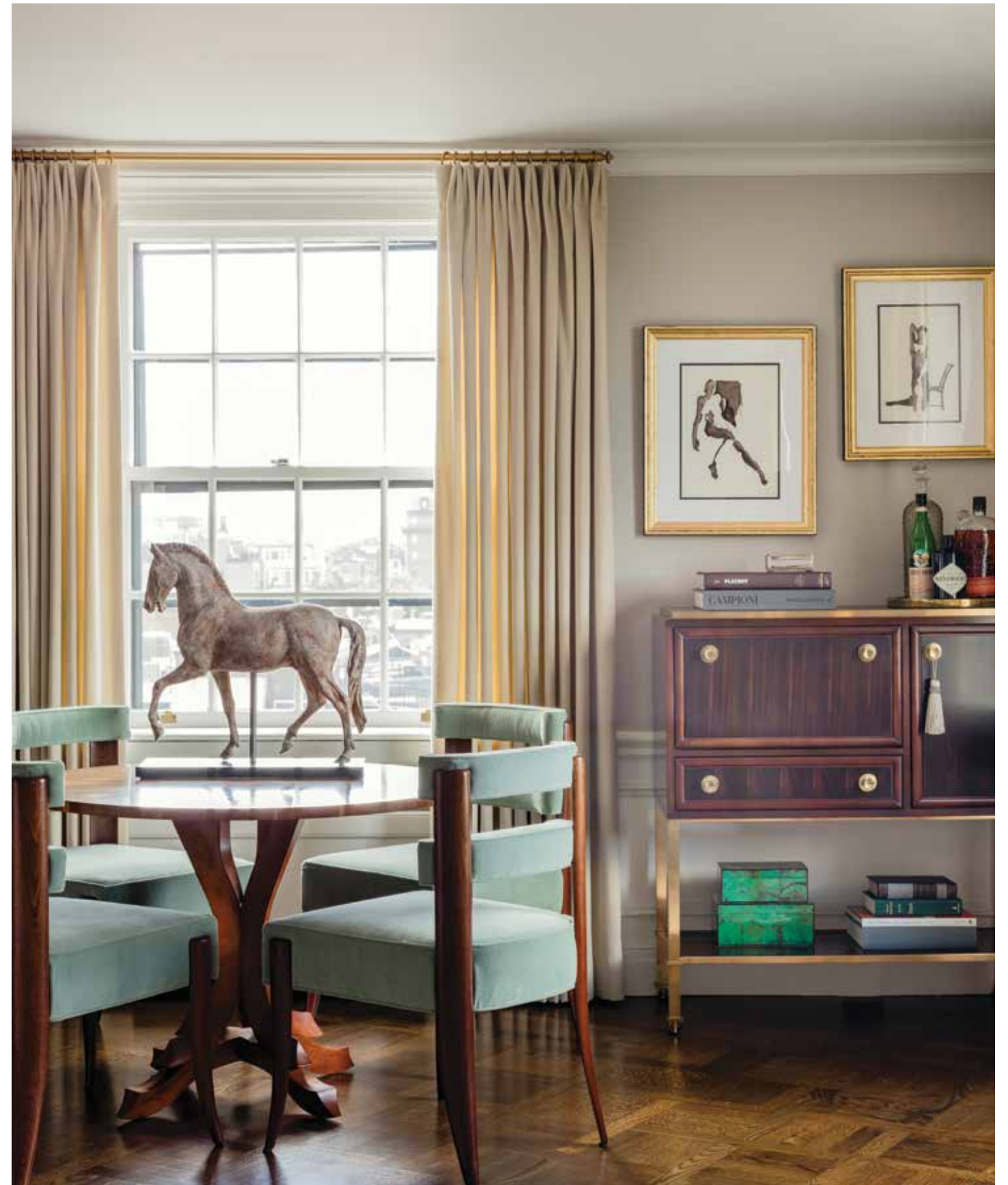
ABOVE: Brassworks Fine Home Details created the custom marble fireplace surrounds. **LEFT:** The powder room goes glam with gold Zoffany wallpaper, a vintage Italian mirror, and bubble-glass sconces by Finnish designer Helena Tynell from the 1960s. **FACING PAGE:** Paolo dining chairs by Studio Van den Akker keep company with a vintage bar cabinet by Baker.



"As a child, I loved Paris apartments and wanted an atelier feel," says Harris, who spent nine years of his childhood living with his family in the French capital. "We wanted classic yet chic and modern—that je ne sais quoi."

To strike this tone the moment you step off the elevator, Hughes painted the foyer in a rich turquoise. Overhead, coordinating hand-painted wallpaper covers the ceiling. Vintage 1920s sconces and a custom gold mirror accent a chandelier, the only pre-redesign element that stayed. "It feels like entering an old mansion," Hughes says. "It's the most Old World of all the rooms, and it just envelopes you at the beginning."

Using a saturated palette throughout, Hughes went bold with blues in the living





The kitchen's leopard-themed glass mosaic backsplash features 24-karat gold leaf and adds another Old World element. **LEFT:** To create this "anti-kitchen," designer Duncan Hughes skipped whites altogether and opted for Benjamin Moore Van Deusen Blue walls, made even more mesmerizing with original artwork by Eric Zener. Leather banquettes and gold Jonathan Adler chairs add to the clubby feel.



spaces and lit up the walk-in closet with a glowing Hermès orange—a nod to the French brand the couple appreciates. Key materials such as nubby raw linen, mohair, and velvet further dial in that casual-yet-sophisticated feel, while black ironwork—a Parisian signature—adorns the primary bathroom's custom curving shower, one of many engineering feats the team tackled. Given the 1940s building was constructed after Boston's Coconut Grove fire, the

deadliest nightclub fire in history, ten-inch-thick concrete walls offer a fireproof, soundproof shell that also made changing anything and everything très difficult.

"The whole building is steel beams, concrete, and terra-cotta blocks," says FBN Construction's Sejal Chander, who served as a project manager along with Aaron Paz. "We couldn't drop the ceilings because they weren't terribly high, so even the lighting plan was a challenge."

“We wanted classic yet chic and modern—that je ne sais quois.”

—HOMEOWNER JOHN HARRIS

Deep blues drench the family room where a lounge and sofa from The Bright Group mix with a pair of Casa Design Group swivel chairs and an original oil painting, *Twilight, Arcadia*, by Dan Goozee.



The stark black-and-white palette of the primary bath reflects the curving metal-and-glass shower created with the help of West Wareham, Massachusetts's Make Architectural Metalworking.

FACING PAGE: Custom scalloped mirrors in gloss black from Mecox make waves with bath fixtures from Lefroy Brooks's 1900 Classic Black collection.





Yet the team found a way (with help via structural engineering and radar) to devise a plan that thoughtfully illuminates just the right corners while leaving others dusky. The salon-style living room sports blown-glass sconces flanking a custom marble fireplace, while the Prussian blue kitchen's gold-inlay ceiling panels reflect light and add to the art deco detail around the apartment. "I call this the anti-kitchen," Hughes says. "I do so many big, bright, white, airy kitchens. This is a late-night kitchen. It's sexy and dark for midnight Champagne, more like a comfortable club."

True enough, many evenings end in the moody kitchen, where the couple cozies up in the caramel-colored banquettes for candlelit grilled-cheese sandwiches and cold Manhattans. Sawyer, a trained chef, loves the mosaic backsplash of dancing leopards and the dramatic underwater artwork above the table. Like everything in the apartment, the room is filled with interesting elements that Hughes says simply "make you feel like you're somewhere else."

EDITOR'S NOTE: For details, see Resources.

ABOVE: Art deco lines repeat in the primary bedroom, where a headboard feels architectural alongside a mirrored nightstand that holds a jewel-like lamp. **BELOW:** Lion-head wall lights from Vaughan flank the fireplace in the primary bedroom, while the walk-in closet glows Hermès orange. **FACING PAGE:** On the private roof-deck, the couple can soak up 360-degree views from their teak Casa Design Group chairs.



INTERIOR DESIGN: Duncan Hughes, Joanne Nhip, Duncan Hughes Interiors

BUILDER: FBN Construction

LANDSCAPE DESIGN: Pamela Rodgers, Verde Garden Design, and Edward MacLean, Tom Kroon, Potted UP

