

ELLE DECOR

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12 ESSENTIALS

CHIC
SUMMER
STYLE

RELAXING
RETREATS
FROM
COAST
TO
COAST





The living room of the Tuxedo Park, New York, house that Michael Bruno shares with Alexander Jakowec; the interior design is by Windsor Smith. The sofa is slipcovered in an Osborne & Little chenille, the armchairs are by Jean-Michel Frank, the 1970s cocktail table and 1940s René Prou nesting tables were found in Paris; the 1920s settee is Swedish, the Regency-style mirror is 19th century, and the rug is by Mansour Modern. For details, see Resources.

HITTING THE MARK

For Michael Bruno, founder of Istdibs, a house in New York’s famed Tuxedo Park is not only the fulfillment of a childhood dream, it’s become a retreat more elegant than he could have imagined

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THE MOVIE VERSION of Michael Bruno's life would open with him as a kid swimming back and forth in a pool—lap upon lap, fast enough to be an Olympic-level athlete. And as he swims, this quick-silver boy is envisioning the house he hopes to own one day: It's brick, and grand, with a steep, gabled roof.

Flash forward a few decades. Bruno and his partner, Alexander Jakowec, are living in a house in Tuxedo Park, New York, that he says is “pretty much identical to the picture I used to have in my mind.”

The outside of it, anyway. The inside is something Bruno admits he never could have dreamed up on his own. Designed by Windsor Smith, it incorporates parts of the vast collection of objects and furnishings Bruno acquired during his 12 years as president and CEO of 1stdibs, the leading online marketplace for antique and vintage furnishings. “Windsor has a way of seeing the world that’s very different than I would,” he says. “She’s great at taking a collection of things and adding this layer of richness and coherence.” Together, collector and designer have transformed a Georgian-style house, in

ABOVE: The house, built in 1900, was designed by architect John Russell Pope. **LEFT:** Bruno with his dogs, Boris and Natasha, on the property. **FACING PAGE:** In the sitting room, a pair of 1970s sofas by Milo Baughman retain their original suede upholstery, the barrel-back chair was bought in Amsterdam, and the chesterfield sofa by Edward Wormley for Dunbar was found at Wyeth; the custom-made étagères are by Windsor Smith Home, the chandelier is by Lucca Studio, the wallpaper is by Ralph Lauren Home, and the hide rug is by Kyle Bunting. For details, see Resources.



The 1970s leather sofa and chairs in another sitting room are by Gerard van den Berg for Montis, the marble top of the cocktail table came from a Belgium chocolate factory, and the camel sculptures were bought on 1stdibs; the mantel is original to the house, and the walls are painted in Benjamin Moore's Dragon's Breath. For details, see Resources.



The entry's bronze chandelier is original to the house, as are the wood floors, which are stained ebony; the chair was found in a Brussels antiques market, and the walls are painted in Benjamin Moore's Decorators White. For details, see Resources.



In the kitchen, vintage Knoll chairs and a pair of armchairs by Jacques Quinet surround a 1970s table by Jules Wabbes that was designed for a conference room; the 19th-century light fixtures are Paris flea-market finds, the rooster sculpture came from Brussels, and floor is paved with marble tiles. For details, see Resources.



A 1920s light fixture by O.C. White Co. hangs above a George II mahogany table in the dining room, the chairs are custom made, and the console is from the 19th century; the 1897 seascape is by Paul Kuhstohs, and the portrait was found at a Paris flea market. **FACING PAGE:** The kitchen counters and sink are custom made, and the dishwasher is by Fisher & Paykel. For details, see Resources.



one of the most famous gilded-age enclaves in America, into a perfect habitat for a cutting-edge Internet entrepreneur.

To Bruno, the childhood-dream-come-true aspect of this property is no mere coincidence. He has experienced the power of focused visualization too many times to write it off as random luck. Bruno began experimenting with the technique when he was just 19. That's the year he read *Think and Grow Rich*, a 1937 book by Napoleon Hill that inspired him to begin studying for his Realtor's license. By 20, he was selling high-end properties in La Jolla, California. He then tackled San Francisco, where many of his clients were young dot-com entrepreneurs; their eye-popping success gave Bruno a new goal. In 1999, he moved to Paris—a break he hoped would help him envision a tech venture. Two days after landing, Bruno accompanied a friend to the Marché aux Pucés. "This is it!" he recalls thinking as he wandered the stalls. "I'm going to put the Paris flea market online." That very day, he began laying the groundwork for 1stdibs; in 2014, the company handled roughly \$1.1 billion in transactions.

Once Bruno had achieved his childhood dream, wasn't it time to take a breather? Hardly. In May he unveiled HousePad, an app designed to help homeowners manage every aspect of their domestic surroundings, from the provenance of an important console to the location of a circuit breaker; from how to spot-clean a carpet to a link you can tap to buy stain-removing supplies. "It's a home for your home," says Bruno. "You take a picture of each room, and if you click on an object, you can pull up detailed information about it. When everything is how it should be, life becomes more efficient."

And make no mistake: Efficiency, for Bruno, is essential. "Michael is an ideas guy," says Smith. "His life is all about energy and movement;



he’s constantly in flux.” Designing rooms that would support his dynamism was her goal at Tuxedo Park. Her first step was to bring clarity and austerity to the interior. The house, built in 1900, is by its nature “very feminine and a little fancy,” says Smith. “I loved the idea of creating a handsome, cleaned-up space. You get that marriage of yin and yang, that tension.” She introduced a strong, neutral color scheme—floors stained dark ebony, walls in shades of gray, coffee, or white. Her textiles range from soft and plush to gleamingly muscular and metallic. Suddenly, the tea-cake quality of the house’s detailing became crisp and logical.

Within this smart, confident frame, Bruno’s possessions could interact—and breathe. “Michael acquires a piece because it speaks to him,” Smith says. “His house never looks like he bought something because it matches the curtains.” That said, several pieces do look as if they might come to life and climb the curtains, or at least chew on them. Bruno has a penchant for animal objects, from plastic giraffe heads he found in Miami to a cast-iron owl from Antwerp.

Overseeing the menagerie are two cream-colored retrievers, Boris and Natasha, who are welcome to lounge on the suede Milo Baughman sofas in the sitting room. “The dogs can come in muddy, dirty, wet. I don’t care,” says Bruno. He knows that pet peeves are as personal as fingerprints. “They’re different for everybody, but everybody has them,” he says. “If something bothers you and you can pull out an app and type it in, you can let go of it—immediately!”

His own clutter cleared, Bruno heads off to one of Tuxedo Park’s pristine lakes for a swim. Although he’ll only be going back and forth over and over, there’s no doubt that he has already begun to cover the vast distance between his here-and-now and The Next Big Thing. ■



In the master bedroom, the custom-made bed is upholstered in a silk mohair by J. Robert Scott, the bedding is by Deborah Sharpe Linens, the 1940s bedside tables came from a Paris flea market, and the gilt-wood mirror is 18th century; the vintage bench is covered in a Schumacher velvet, the rug is by Mansour Modern, and the walls are painted in Benjamin Moore’s Indian River. **FACING PAGE:** An 18th-century ladder-back chair and a 1920s towel stand in the master bath; the sink fittings are by Kallista, and the hamper is from HomeGoods. For details, see Resources.