

INTERIOR DESIGN[®]

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high on new york



tree house

Two dark apartments were united to form a skylit triplex with white oak floors. ➔

firm: de-spec *site:* west village



Clockwise from top left: A floating walkway leads to the master bedroom doorway framed in oak. Leading from the garden, stairs of white oak terminate at the living room's Noë Duchaufour-Lawrance chair. Solid-surfacing forms the master bathroom's custom vanity. Kitchen countertops are quartzite. The living room's sectional sofa and ottoman are by Antonio Citterio.

Convincing New Yorkers to sacrifice space is never easy. But De-spec founder Farnaz Mansuri knows the power of a carefully placed cut. In renovating two cramped apartments into a soaring triplex in the West Village, she proved that sacrificing a few feet can be the key to something much grander.

Mansuri had already updated political consultant Bernard Whitman's duplex when the apartment upstairs became available, offering the opportunity to transform the spaces, each just 12 feet wide, into a 1,300-square-foot town house-like oasis. The three floors are offset against two stacked walls of glass, all opening to the 1930 apartment building's communal garden.

"I was looking to solve issues of urban life like lack of access to nature," Mansuri says. So the designer proposed an enticing idea: By replacing the ceiling of the newly acquired apartment's ceiling, Whitman and his now-fiancé, Constantin Mitides, a computer scientist, would be able to look up at the leafy block's maple and elm trees while cooking. But to do so, Mansuri would have to open things up, meaning slicing away 9 feet along the length of the street-level floor plate facing the garden.

"When we first saw how much she cut the floor back, we almost broke into tears," Whitman recalls. But the tears were short-lived. Today, a cantilevered white-oak staircase rises through two more new apertures to link the three formerly disjointed levels, creating an overlay of circulation and habitable spaces. The kitchen, for example, is tucked beneath the stairs leading up from the dining area to the den and master suite. ➤





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*Slabs of Chinese marble line
the master bathroom. ➤*



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From top: In the master bedroom, Greta Magnusson Grossman sconces flank the custom bed. The exterior staircase is painted steel.

A leather-upholstered dining banquette juts into the newly created void, with a cozy living room nestled underneath on the garden level.

Interiors now read as a series of monochromatic white rooms with rich pockets of stony darkness. LED sconces bounce light off the sleek architectural surfaces, while glass pendant fixtures above the dining area add depth to the volume. When viewed from the garden below, they appear like a constellation.

—Heather Corcoran

FROM FRONT WASCO: CUSTOM SKYLIGHTS (DEN). **LIGNE ROSET**: CHAIRS (LIVING ROOM). **STONE SOURCE**: PANELING, FLOORING (BATHROOM). **DORNBRACHT**: SINK FITTINGS, TOWEL BAR, SHOWER FAUCET. **LACAZA**: SINK. **EVANS & PAUL**: CUSTOM VANITY. **DUPONT**: VANITY MATERIAL. **ROBEM**: MEDICINE CABINET. **DURAVIT**: TOILET. **LINEA LIGHTS**: SCONCE. **MINIMAL KITCHENS**: CUSTOM CABINETRY (KITCHEN). **GAGGENAU**: OVENS. **CEADESIGN**: SINK FITTINGS. **KOHLER CO.**: SINK. **DESIGN WITHIN REACH**: CHAIRS (DINING AREA). **EDELMAN**: CUSTOM BENCH UPHOLSTERY. **LUMIFER**: PENDANT FIXTURES. **BBB ITALIA**: TABLE (DINING AREA), SECTIONAL, OTTOMAN, TRAY (LIVING ROOM). **ARTEMIDE**: SCONCES (LIVING ROOM). **HANSGROHE**: SHOWERHEADS (BATHROOM). **CRISTINA RUBINETTERIE**: RAIN SHOWERHEAD. **BROCHIER**: HEADBOARD FABRIC (BEDROOM). **RH**: CHAIRS (PATIO). **THROUGHOUT** WESTERN WINDOW SYSTEMS: CUSTOM DOORS, WINDOWS. **TARANTINO CONSULTING GROUP**: ENGINEER OF RECORD, MEP. **CONNOLLY ENGINEERING**: STRUCTURAL ENGINEER. **GW MANUFACTURING**; **URBAN MILLWORK**: WOODWORK. **ALMONTE HOME IMPROVEMENTS**: GENERAL CONTRACTOR.