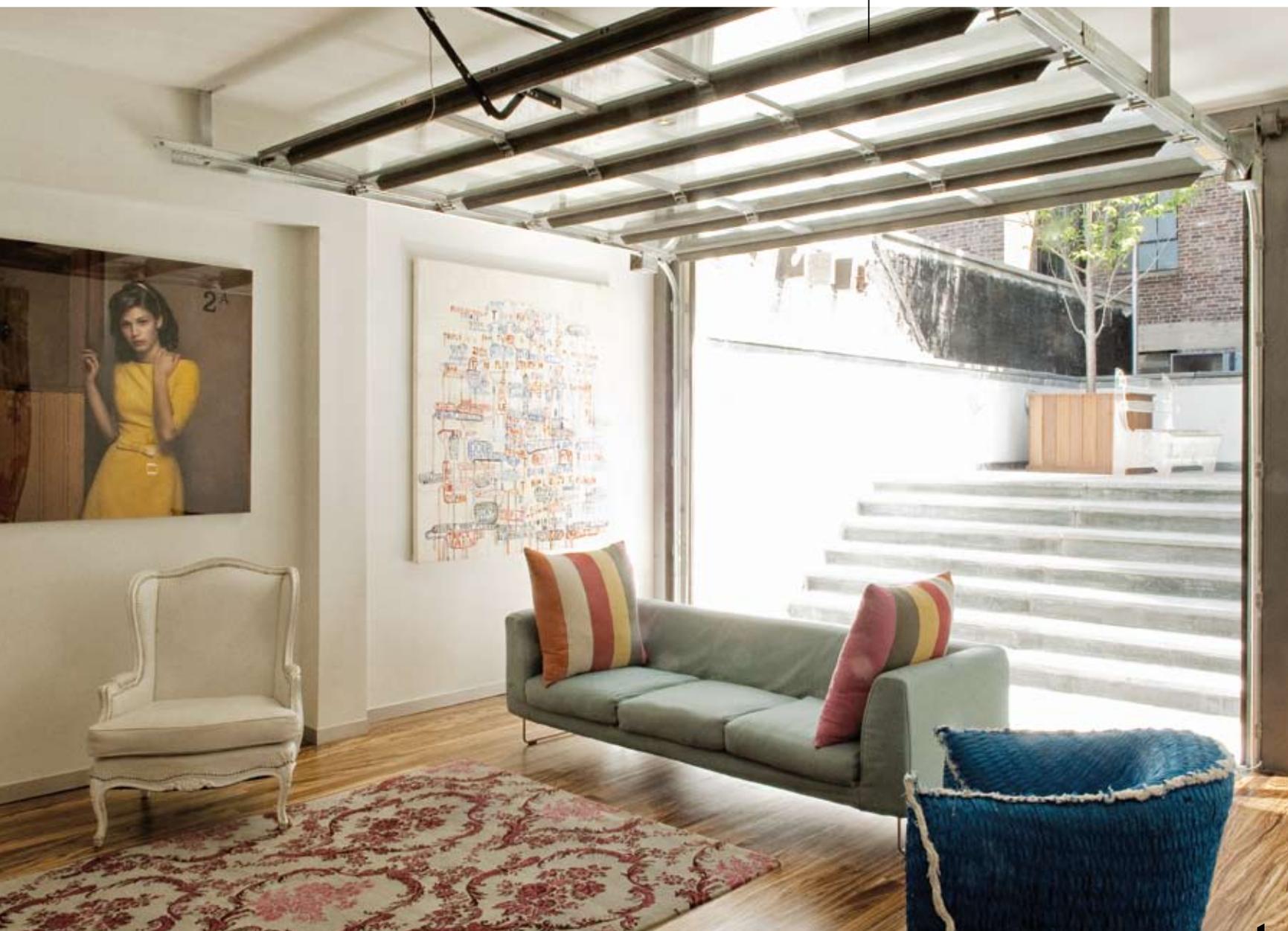


At the rear of the living room on the second floor, an electric garage door opens to the back terrace. The sofa is from Capellini and the photo at left is by Erwin Olaf.

OPPOSITE PAGE: The family commissioned British artist Richard Woods, who has reportedly been hired to give the popular Lever House Restaurant a new look, to paint the façade.

# mood squad



A creative family makes its **mark**.  
BY SUE HOSTETLER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATTHEW WILLIAMS







Light boxes by artist Heidi Cody spell out what the house is all about—family. Chairs found at a Brooklyn flea market surround a vintage French science table.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Wolfie Novogratz in the basketball court below a vintage scoreboard found on eBay. The floor is oak set in a herringbone motif.

If what Andy Warhol famously suggested is true—that everyone will eventually get 15 minutes of fame—then Cortney and Bob Novogratz are surely on the cusp of their allotted time. Earlier this year, the husband and wife design team/real estate developers released their first book, *Downtown Chic*, which chronicles 10 years of turning dilapidated buildings into swank residences in lower Manhattan. They recently moved into the newest over-the-top townhouse of their own design on the West Side Highway, and along with their *seven* children signed with the venerable Ford Modeling Agency.

But the thing most likely to make them a household name is *9 by Design*, their own reality show slated to air on Bravo early next year. The show focuses primarily on projects that the couple has been working on all year,

like their new home and their first commercial endeavor, a boutique hotel on the Jersey shore called Bungalow. “We spent six months this year shooting eight one-hour episodes,” says Cortney. “We hear it looks like nothing on Bravo or any other network. We hope that’s a good thing... if not we’ll just move to Brazil.”

One gets the distinct impression that Cortney need not worry about their future success. Both husband and wife exude an authentic Southern charm (Cortney, 37, hails from Georgia and Bob, 46, is from Virginia) and have a palpable magnetism and proven track record for creating innovative homes that win over both buyers and the press. (Swing-for-the-fences ambition runs in Bob’s family—his brother Mike is with Fortress Investment Group and his sister Jacqueline is the CEO of Acumen Fund.)





A piece made out of pearl buttons by British artist Ann Carrington hangs over a Boffi marble tub in the master bath.



A work by Vik Muniz decorates the nursery. Floors throughout the home are of zebrawood.



A floor of black-and-white Bisazza tiles adds a dash of old-school charm to the home's formal entry. A pair of paintings by Richard Woods hang behind an Arik Levy light fixture.

OPPOSITE PAGE: The immense desk by Zaha Hadid had to be craned into the master bedroom before the windows were installed. Lights from a Paris flea market hang near an Indonesian bed.

The Novogratzes began in 1996 with a condemned 19th-century brick townhouse in Chelsea and have worked their way east, turning a manufacturing building in Soho and an adjoining parking lot into striking, almost European-looking homes. (The pair handles everything from purchasing property to architectural design, construction—with their own crew—and interior décor.) After successfully flipping those properties, they bought four buildings that had been gun shops and tenement apartments on Centre Market Street (on the border of Little Italy and Chinatown) and literally transformed the neighborhood.

Their ultracontemporary new home, the 11th property that the couple has either refurbished or built from the ground up, fits right in with the new neighboring architectural landscape of the far West Village—like Julian Schnabel's pink Italianate villa and the glass Meier buildings. "We always look for amazing locations and being right on the highway was a no-brainer," explains Bob. "The views of the river are amazing."

The property also has a colorful history, first as an S&M club and then as a BMW repair shop. Its current incarnation: a six-story concrete and steel structure hidden behind a daring façade custom-painted by British artist-of-the-moment Richard Woods, whose work the couple has always admired. "We felt that being in this neighborhood with all the great new architecture was an opportunity to do something unique and fun," says Cortney. The interiors are equally distinctive, featuring the trademark Novogratz mix of minimalism and whimsy.

On the ground level, behind the garage, the Novogratzes excavated several feet to make room for a basketball court with 16-foot ceilings that doubles as a home theater (their

children range in age from 10 months to 12 years, and the oldest is an aspiring NBA player). The second floor features a sleek Boffi kitchen and an electric garage door that opens the entire back of the home to a charming outdoor terrace. The upper floors contain five expansive bedrooms and three baths. "We keep the rooms big and open with not a lot of clutter so the kids have room to play," Cortney says. The kids' bathrooms feature colorful Bisazza tiles that lend an exuberant and youthful aesthetic.

Sprinkled throughout the space is a funky, smartly edited collection of art and furnishings that exudes a hip, relaxed quality. Works by Raymond Pettibon, Peter Beard and Vik Muniz blend with groovy light fixtures from Moss and flea-market finds. The couple seems to design with a sly wink and a smile, all the while knowing how to pull a visual punch. "We always mix antiques with contemporary," explains Cortney. "Many of the pieces are one-of-a-kind and make a statement, as the Zaha Hadid desk in the master [suite] does. The kids call it Jaws—don't tell her."

Though there has been some sniping on the blogs about the duo's public persona and success, the fact remains that the Novogratzes have created a lucrative niche business in the cutthroat world of New York City real estate. Many admire their singular design aesthetic. Ironically, their greatest asset may be that neither has a traditional architecture or interior design background—they adhere to no ingrained rules and believe that anything is possible. And maybe more important yet, they seem to approach their work in much the same way as they approach life itself—with infinite passion—which results in a happy family, a pretty cool house and with any luck, some entertaining television. **G**