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**INSIDE
RALPH LAUREN'S
ULTRACHIC
MANHATTAN
HOME**



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NORTH INTERIORS
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#BX#BKBZ ***FIRM**CAR-RT LOT**B-066
AVON CO 81620-8300



The front deck of interior designer Mikhail Dantes's home in Denver.



The family room.

The original living room fireplace is now faced in limestone. **BELOW:** The plan of the 4,000-square-foot house. See Resources.



On the Rise

In Denver, an up-and-coming designer creates a personal retreat, transforming a 1950s ranch house into a spare and serene pavilion in the sky. Interview by Mitchell Owens

ELLE DECOR: I always admire people who take their time before building a new house. You spent four years planning every detail before breaking ground.

MIKHAIL DANTES: I bought the property for the land. The house was a 1950s ranch that wasn't worth reworking, but I lived in it anyway. That four years gave me time to collaborate with Scott Parker of Nest Architectural Design, who came up with the perfect replacement house for the lot, which is on a hilltop overlooking Denver.

ED: The house you built is so serene. It's almost like a temple.

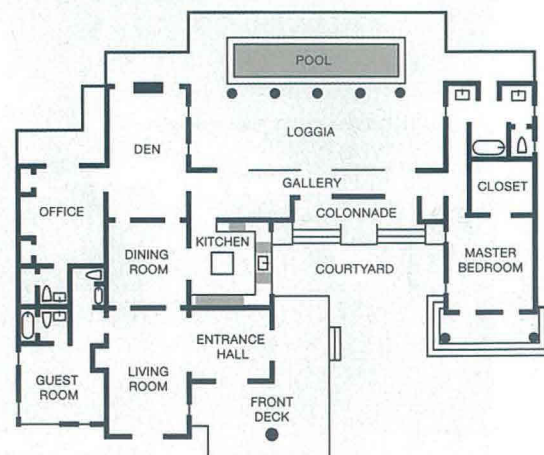
MD: I go to Greece every year, but I swear the house wasn't inspired by the Parthenon! I just wanted something clean and modern that

wasn't cold. I'm a big fan of the Bauhaus era and love International Style. Basically I wanted a home with few rooms, high ceilings, lots of light, and numerous outdoor spaces.

ED: You didn't tear the original house down completely, though.

MD: There were some details of the previous house I wanted to retain, such as the size of the entrance hall and the size of the living room. I saved the original fireplace and chimney, too, because you can't build open wood-burning fireplaces in Denver anymore. I just gave it a new limestone surround to bring it up to date.

ED: The rooms are tall and generous in scale. They also have a stateliness unusual for a modernist space.





The loggia and lap pool at the rear of the house.



The living and dining rooms.



A large window in the kitchen looks onto the front courtyard.

MD: Many modern houses have open floor plans that offer no surprises. I like the formality of having separate rooms that flow into each other—which is great when you have big parties. I was careful about creating a spatial experience, from the ceilings, which are between 13 and 17 feet high, to the tall, narrow, rectangular shape of the doors and windows.

ED: There are very few windows, which is a striking departure.

MD: I prefer glass doors to windows. Opening doors when the weather is nice creates a whole different atmosphere than just opening windows. I didn't use many moldings either. That's the key to minimal design: Keep it extremely simple, but mix hard and soft elements together to keep it from seeming chilly.

ED: What are some of the materials you used throughout the house?

MD: White stucco for the exterior walls, poured concrete for the exterior columns, and rift-cut oak for the floors and to frame the interior doorways. Being a designer, I'm sensitive to materials that have a tactile quality. So I chose all-natural fabrics and coverings, including leather, silk, cotton, wool, and linen.

ED: The use of mosaics and marble in the bathrooms feels both modern and ancient, especially when the materials are married to creamy plaster walls.



DESIGN SOLUTIONS

MD: I'm a big fan of mosaic floors in bathrooms, and of the way the material feels underfoot. And I love veined statuary marble. In the master bathroom, the alcove that contains the shower and sunken tub is lined with slabs of marble whose edges project about an inch from the plaster wall, which gives the space a natural frame. It's a subtle detail that provides a lot of impact, similar to how the windows throughout the house meet the ceilings. I hadn't planned on using any window coverings. The house is very secluded, so I could get away with that.

ED: The restrained palette of the house seems to defer to the landscape. Did you plan it that way?

MD: Black, gray, and white is a combination I never tire of. White walls with dark floors make me happy. We have great light in Denver. You want to make the most of it by keeping the rooms restrained.

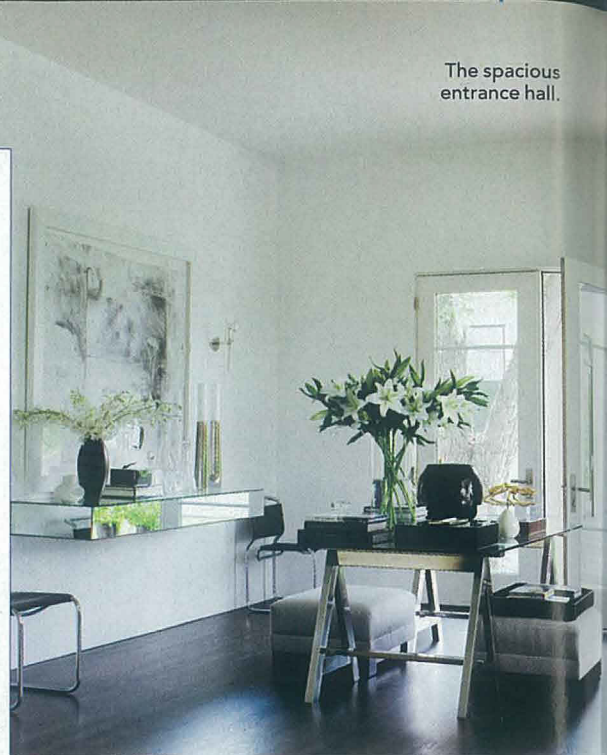
ED: My favorite spot in the house is the loggia overlooking the pool.

MD: I have large dinner parties there in the summer, with a dozen people around the 14-foot-long table. But there's a dining room indoors, too, for more formal evenings, and a big table in the kitchen, which I use most of the time. All my friends cook, so they take over the kitchen. My job is easy—arranging the flowers and setting the table. ■

WHAT THE PROS KNOW

- Dantes uses glass doors rather than windows to give rooms a sense of airiness. Doors designed with openings that almost reach the ceiling make any room seem larger.
- High ceilings and enfilades that line up doors and windows make a house feel spacious.
- A limited palette needs varying textures to keep the decor scheme intriguing, so play hard surfaces against soft fabrics, metal against wood, marble against plaster. Poured concrete, when polished to a subtle sheen, can be as elegant as rare marble—and is more affordable.
- Establish dining areas inside and out to create different moods when entertaining. Terraces and porches broaden the possibilities while adding friendliness and ease to the architecture.

The spacious entrance hall.



Clean-lined furnishings in the master bedroom.



The master bath has a mosaic-tile floor and walls sheathed in statuary marble.

