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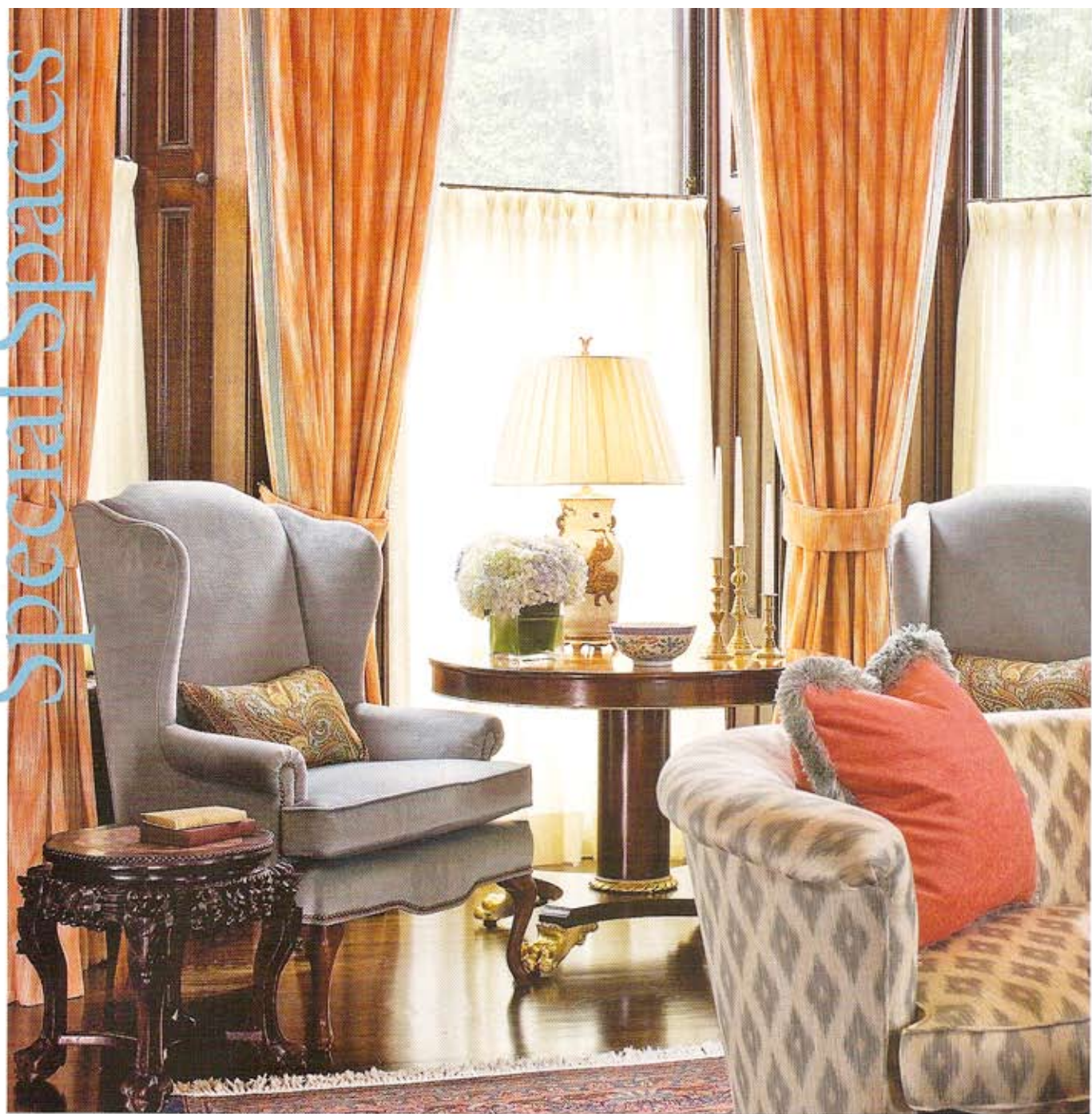
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HIGH MARKS GO TO THE GROUP OF TOP NEW ENGLAND
DESIGNERS WHO CAME TOGETHER TO GIVE THE VENERABLE
COLLEGE CLUB OF BOSTON A FRESH NEW LOOK.

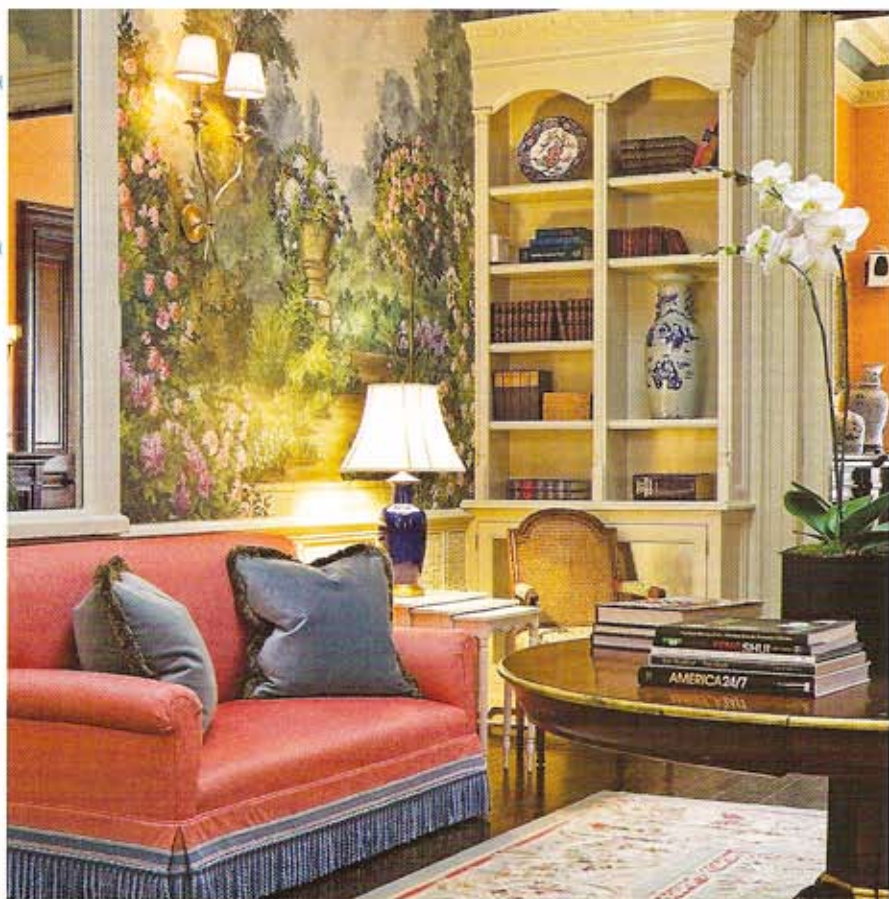
TOP OF THEIR CLASS

TEXT BY REGINA COLE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAM GRAY

The ambitious restoration and redecoration of the College Club of Boston may be the most important interior design project in a private club since Elsie de Wolfe created New York's Colony Club in 1905. On that historic occasion, Boston's College Club was already fifteen years old, founded as a place for college-educated women to "enjoy sociability and companionship." Today it



At one end of the Percy Dauber rooms, Gerald Pomeroy played up the splendid architecture with pretty window treatments and fresh upholstery. **FACING PAGE:** The members' room offers a warm, intimate environment.



continues to function as a literate B&B, lecture hall, ballroom, gallery and membership organization devoted to high-minded pursuits (and nowadays welcoming men, too). The clubhouse is a handsome Victorian brownstone at 44 Commonwealth Avenue, the epicenter of traditional Boston society. And, now that the club has called on some of Boston's best designers to bring new life to the august building's interior, the clubhouse has entered a new golden age.

"When we first began to talk about this, I had an epiphany," says Gerald Pomerooy, a College Club member and designer of the stunning Percy-Dauber drawing rooms and members' room. "I imagined people standing in this room a hundred years from now, celebrating the

"THE WORD I KEEP USING IS CELEBRATION," POMEROY SAYS. "WE GAVE NEW LIFE TO THIS WONDERFUL OLD PLACE AND REINTRODUCED IT TO SOCIETY."



group of artisans who had come together to redo this townhouse. I felt humbled."

That spirit guided the project over its two-and-a-half years, from the moment a surprising donation arrived from a long-standing member. When then-club president Judith Joyce traveled to deliver a personal thank you, she set in motion a chain of generosity, creativity and resourcefulness in which the gifts kept coming. The superb assemblage of Boston-area interior designers even donated their services. "I was so excited," says Lisey Good, who originated the idea of treating the guest rooms as if they were showhouse rooms featured on one of TV's ubiquitous makeover shows. A member of the College Club board and

ABOVE: Susan Harter's lush garden mural defines an area in the center parlor of the Percy-Dauber rooms. **LEFT:** Heather Wells honors her alma mater's colors with soft yellow walls and blue toile upholstery in the Smith College room.



LEFT: In the Tufts University room, Allison Hughes channels the warmth of the Tisch Library. **BELOW:** The Connecticut College room, designed by Lisey Good, makes witty reference to the school mascot with its camel-colored walls.

designer of the club's Wheaton College dining room and Connecticut College bedroom, Good says, "It seemed a great way to publicize our bed and breakfast and the club in general."

The result features glamorous public

rooms, a chic and comfortable members' dining room, and some of the nicest guest rooms in the Back Bay.

To redecorate the busy bed-and-breakfast inn without shutting it down completely, rooms were completed se-



quentially, each designer given a mere two weeks to transform his or her space.

The Connecticut College room's camel-colored walls and crisp blue and white accents exemplify the design guidelines: that designers take their cues from the college's culture and traditions. "The camel is the school mascot," explains Good, a Connecticut College graduate and the room's designer. "The college colors are blue and white."

Smith alumna Heather Wells designed the Smith College room in a lovely and delicate mix of that school's blue and golden-yellow colors. Allison Hughes credits the inspiration for her chocolate-brown and sky-blue Tufts room to the Tisch Library, with its exceptional views of the Boston skyline. In the top-floor Vassar room, Michael Carter decorated the terra-cotta red walls with evocative photographs from a 1915 Vassar yearbook. Above the mantel, he hung a reproduction medieval tapestry that, for years, had gone unnoticed against the dirty white walls of the drawing room. "It was so perfectly appropriate above the Victorian marble fireplace," Carter says. "And it fit the budget," he adds with a laugh.

Any budget constraints are invisible in the results. Good's design for the dining room, for example, transformed it with a few simple additions. "This was the red-headed stepchild; every other room has great architecture. For years, I sat in the dining room during meetings while I thought about what I'd do if given the chance," she says.

She made the room special by introducing a mantelpiece and handsome, hard-wearing carpet, and accentuating the window bay (while disguising its view of an alley) with simple, monochromatic panels hung with botanical art.

The magnificent double parlor and attached members' room is another tour de force. "When you have architecture



LEFT: The once drab Wheaton College dining room has attained handsome comfort via a new fireplace wall. **BELOW:** Michael Carter gave a long-ignored tapestry a new home in the Vassar College room.

like this," Pomeroy says, "drama is possible. We celebrated the architecture, but we also created something fresh, timely and fashionable."

The center room of the three features a mural created by Susan Harter, known

for the classically inspired canvases she paints in her studio and then applies like wallpaper. She found thematic inspiration in the Fragonard murals at New York's Frick Collection, and based her color palette on Pomeroy's choice of fabrics.



"I have always liked Gerald's work; he uses color like a painter," she says. "Every mural solves a problem," she adds. "Here, it was darkness, a sense of enclosure in this space and stodginess. Above all, I wanted it to be romantic, because this room is often used for weddings."

The lush garden scene she created is "the landscape we would love to imagine outside the doors," she says. "I wanted to make it personal to the club, so I asked the past club presidents for their favorite flowers, which are incorporated along with a statue of Athena, goddess of wisdom. She represents the College Club's intellectual bent. Her familiar is a wise owl; the room is dedicated to Elsbeth Melville Percy, who loved owls."

With help from Harter, designer Darlene Gentle and decorative painter Cheryl O'Donnell, who created the faux finish in the members' room, Pomeroy transformed a dingy set of rooms into a comfortable, colorful and drop-dead gorgeous interior. He introduced new pilasters that help to define the two halves of the drawing room, accentuated the skylight with new glass and lighting, and spruced up the superb existing millwork with high-gloss paint. When the budget did not allow for new furnishings, Pomeroy gave new life to existing pieces with fresh upholstery, paint and gilding. Pale blue and green ceiling colors echo the pastoral calm of the newly created living space.

"When architecture is this impressive, it sometimes dehumanizes the space," says Gentle. "We brought it into the now by softening with color, creating contemporary finishes and taking away the austere feeling."

"When I talk about this project, the word I keep using is celebration," Pomeroy says. "We gave new life to this wonderful old place and reintroduced it to society." **NEH**

EDITOR'S NOTE For more information about the designers featured here see page 266.