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ENLARGING DOORWAYS BETWEEN ROOMS, SAYS LEDBETTER, "HELPS OPEN UP THE SPACES, CREATE FLOW, INCREASE VIEWS, AND BRING IN LIGHT."

Lee Ledbetter, the New Orleans architect and interior designer who renovated the faded landmark. Like Robert A.M. Stern, for whom he once worked, he is both talented and scholarly. But Ledbetter's projects—Torres's hip hotels among them—most often take a modernist turn, even when, as in this case, the building is historic. In fact, the three-story dwelling was previously one of his client's hotels, the Rivers Inn. After the hurricane some of Torres's properties were struggling for survival, so he turned the place into his personal residence.

Ledbetter expanded many of the three-foot-wide doorways between rooms to 12 feet. "I've renovated four large French Quarter houses, and I've done this in every one," the architect says. "It helps open up the spaces, create flow, increase views, and bring in light. But I also respect what's there." For instance, existing moldings were expertly replicated to preserve the rooms' historic integrity. Torres was involved in every design decision, from choosing appliances for the streamlined kitchen to picking out marble for the five luxurious baths. "I had to run all the whites by him," Ledbetter says with a grin.

Classic 20th-century furnishings—never the obvious ones, more Osvaldo Borsani than Charles and Ray Eames—define the interiors, along with a scattering of antiques. The architect also mixed in contemporary art, namely striking modern works by admired Louisiana artist George Dunbar, a client and longtime friend. Every sofa is a Ledbetter creation, including the living room's 13-foot sectional, which he covered in a silk velvet whose color wavers intriguingly between gunmetal and bronze.

The introduction of that elusive shade took a bit of lobbying, since Torres will



Clockwise from left: The master suite is furnished with a pair of 1970 Jan Ekseius chairs covered in a Zimmer + Rohde fabric, a vintage cocktail table by T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbings, Gino Sarfatti's 1960s Triennale standing lamp for ArteLuce, and a custom-made sofa dressed in a Holly Hunt fabric with pillows of a Sahco cotton from Donghia. An antique French chandelier hangs in Torres's closet. In the master bath, the Ledbetter-designed vanity is surmounted by Waterworks sconces; the sink fittings are by AF New York.





countenance only black and white. "I like the way that combination defines architecture," the hotelier says. "This place is all about high ceilings, thick crown moldings, and wide-board pine floors." Nonetheless, Ledbetter smuggled in shades of brown, bronze, and gray and glints of gold to relieve the severity of the palette. For the floors, a stain was custom mixed—70 percent ebony, 30 percent coffee-brown—and topped off with three coats of high-gloss polyurethane for a patent-leather luster. "Near-black is much more interesting than jet-black," the architect insists. "It's got so much more depth."

Ledbetter decorated the three-room master suite, a space flooded with sunlight from triple-hung windows, all in white with ethereal gold accents. Was he trying to dial up some serious Hollywood glamour, maybe making a reference to

Jean Harlow's snowy bedroom in the movie *Dinner at Eight*? Not intentionally, Ledbetter says; the all-white scheme was chosen mainly because it makes the room feel "up in the clouds." That heavenly sensation is underscored by vast white shag rugs "so thick you want to roll around on them," says Torres's fiancée, Jennifer Savoie, who met him after the house was finished.

The two hit it off the moment they were introduced—by Torres's mother, no less, who bumped into the young woman at a hair salon. Now the couple is working together on the Bahamas resort project. "It will be white, white, white," Savoie says. "We'll bring color in through pillows and art, but no black." And once that job is done, there's one more improvement left to make at the house in New Orleans: Ledbetter says he will be building the future Mrs. Torres one fantastic closet. □

Above: A 1960s Murano-glass chandelier sparkles in the den, near a Yasumasa Morimura print; the floor lamp is by Cedric Hartman, the Ledbetter-designed sofas are upholstered in a Designers Guild fabric, the throw pillows are made of Romo textiles, and the vintage tables are gilt bronze. **Opposite:** Curtains of a Sahco wool from Donghia hang in a guest room; the bedside tables are vintage Paul McCobb, and the Louis XVI-style bench is clad in a Pollack velvet.

