

MARCH-APRIL 2015

VERANDA

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ROMANTIC ROOMS
& SECRET GARDENS



THE CULTIVATED

Life

at my table

UP IN THE AIR

Michael S. Smith's
Manhattan terrace makes
an ideal perch for a breezy
afternoon get-together.

Table and stools,
Treillage; sofas with
cushions in a Rose
Tarlow Melrose House
fabric and Perennials
trim, Kenneth Lynch
& Sons.

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Layered plantings give outdoor spaces the intimacy of rooms. 19th-century French table; chairs with cushions in a Schumacher stripe, Kenneth Lynch & Sons. **BELOW:** Custom Spanish ceramic plates and table linens, Jasper; vintage flatware.

An apartment with a terrace in Manhattan is the real-estate equivalent of a Ming vase or Jacob chair—coveted, sought after, and rare. Leave it to Michael S. Smith, the celebrated classicist who decorated the private quarters of the Obama White House, to score a penthouse pied-à-terre boasting a wrap-around band of outdoor space with views in every direction.

“It’s a garden in the sky with a real sense of scope,” says the Los Angeles-based designer. “We’re always running around in the city, and this is a meditative spot to have a drink or cup of coffee. At the same time, the hustle and bustle is only an elevator away.”

It may as well be worlds. Planted in lush layers, with evergreens, vines, and mostly white blooms, the oasis

is startlingly intimate despite the buzzing metropolis below. Vegetation frames views of Central Park, while less picturesque vistas are screened with trellises and greenery. The apartment itself is French-inflected, with 1920s and ’30s references, and Smith matched that attitude outside. “I didn’t want it to feel overly manicured,” he says. Striped awnings and umbrellas nod to the era, too.

When Smith and his partner, James Costos, the U.S. ambassador to Spain, are in town, the couple use the terrace often to entertain, with evening cocktails or alfresco meals. “It’s outdoors, so inherently it’s a little casual. But it’s a very adaptable space. At night, with the hurricanes lit, it can be quite elegant,” Smith says.

For a recent lunch, the atmosphere was laid-back yet refined. Smith left





Effortless Joy 40x40 oil on canvas



Roses frame a marble console with an intricately carved base that Smith set up as a bar.

the 19th-century marble table bare and set places using artisanal ceramics and linens handmade in Spain. “The dishes are painted with these beautiful stylized trees and made in a village outside Toledo. The napkins and placemats are woven in a workshop in Majorca,” he explains. “We’re keen on Spanish craft, and it makes a difference to buy something from someone you know, still making things in time-honored ways.” The contrast of the traditional colorful dishes and creamy napkins against the veined stone is chic in an offhand way. “It’s charming and personal—perfect for the garden.”

Tumblers in thick verdigris-hued glass and sleek copper-colored mugs echo the tones in the plates without feeling too slavish. Rounding out the table are simple arrangements of chartreuse and burgundy sedum, which march down its center in grassy green pots and pop alongside intricately etched silver salt and pepper shakers that glint in the sunlight like jewelry. The scene is deliciously unbuttoned. “To sit and have lunch with all the greenery and blooms and look out at the skyline or the park is hard to duplicate,” Smith says. “It’s such a luxury.” □

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