



The Zurich project, which was executed online by Val Nikitin Design company.

STRONG FOUNDATIONS

He has given the who's who of the world their astoundingly beautiful and practically comfortable houses. Val Nikitin, the New-York based architect and interior designer, is known for his impeccable detailing. Medha Shri gets tips on fine designing and asks who takes the decor decisions at his own home.

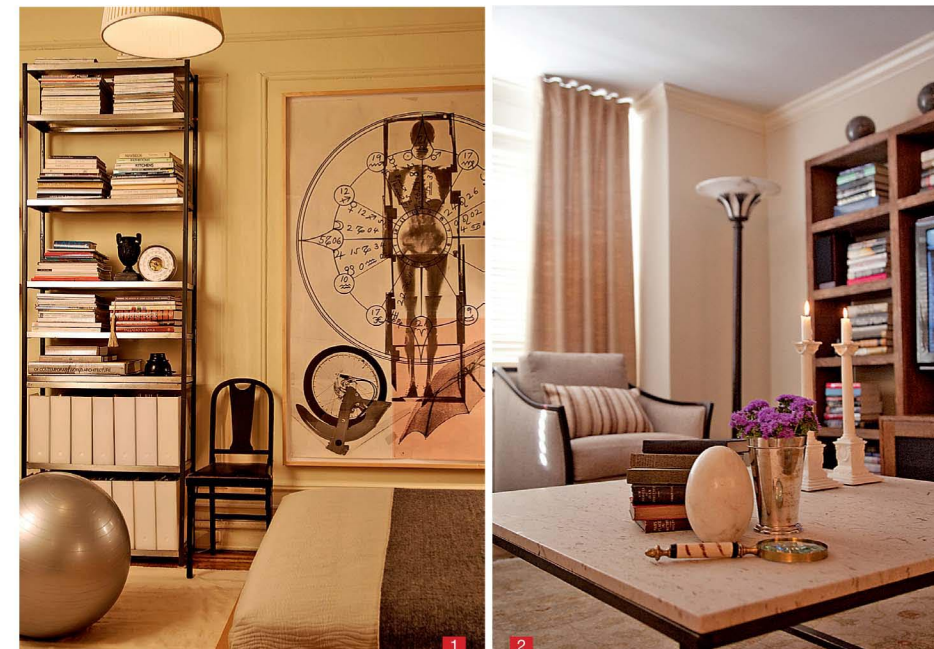
You have this amazing house with absolutely awesome interiors and everything that you have always wanted, err, inside your head. The problem is finding the right person who'll give your vision shape, making it better without disregarding your 'wants'. Meet Val Nikitin, a much-coveted architect who's been building and giving facelifts to houses and offices and their interiors. He has worked with famous interior designing firm Sills Huniford Associates with high-profile clients like members of Rockefeller family to Tina Turner and Vera Wang. His experiences have taught him about the right balance of European sensibility and respect for architectural detail in his projects. Born in

Ukraine and now settled in New York for last 20 years, Nikitin's popularity compelled him to even take on projects online for those far away who could trust only him and none other with their nests.

He was recently in the news for designing the interiors for a house in Zurich online while stationed in New York. The project not only brought him much media attention for being an expert but also fetched another assignment from the same people. He says, "The other online project was for a home in London, but at a larger scale – it was a 150-square metre duplex – that included the renovation of two full bathrooms, kitchen, and walk-in closet. This work will be posted on my website soon."

The projects that he does online constitute only 20 per cent of his work and

despite more people approaching him for such projects, he prefers the traditional way of execution. "It's a little easier than online work, because you can verify your design concepts on the job site. You can see some of the mistakes during the construction and fix them as you go." Though he does acknowledge that online projects save on time and money, "You don't have to travel back and forth to the site; time one spends in sometimes useless meetings is saved too and you have flexibility." He points out that it is very essential for such projects to have the right relationship between the designer and the client. "100 per cent trust is required. The client becomes a real member of project team, participating in online meetings, responding to e-mails, approving online design images and



PHOTOGRAPHS: VAL NIKITIN DESIGN

1. Val Nikitin's own apartment in Manhattan.
- 2 & 3. Manhattan projects executed by his company.
4. Val Nikitin combines the antique and contemporary in his designs.

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concepts. The designer must be careful with the size and proportion when selecting furniture as it is hard to imagine the real space without having been there physically."

Today, he is an exceptional architect and space designer and really loves his works – probably because he followed his heart. "Even as a kid, I liked to draw and paint, read art and architecture books," he shares, adding that he hasn't looked back ever since he went to architectural school. For the past 20 years he has diversified into interior designing as well, but architecture remains his strong foundation. "I trained as an architect, so for me the function of space is a priority. Thus we usually do some adjustments to the existing floor plan to get more favourable room proportions. Then

we try to pick furniture, paying attention to how different fabrics, colours, and texture schemes fit in the room as a whole."

Nikitin's signature style is to bring about a confluence of antique and contemporary. In his long and successful career, he has completed imposing and impressive residential and commercial work, from renovating five-star hotels in New York, Washington DC and London, to landmark conceptual architecture, custom furniture and millwork detail development. Having worked with people from various continents and countries, he observes that each country has its own specifics in design based on culture, traditions, history, current political situation, and, of course, the budget. "For instance, if you see modern projects in Ukraine, they are very bright with slick ultra-modern furniture and accessories. Unfortunately, mostly of these projects look like furniture showrooms. The great projects in Europe are calmer, with sophisticated design scheme and often with museum-quality furniture and lighting," substantiates the architect. Yet, no matter where he is or what his own vision is, he ensures that the client's vision is met, "I always remember that I design for the client, not something of my own, so I have to satisfy the client using my professional skills," he shares.

He places much importance on building strong foundations, avoiding plagiarism, sketching by hand, and studying the history of art and architecture. We ask him his thoughts on the magnificent Indian architectural marvels like Taj Mahal and Khajuraho temples. "There are probably very few people in the world who haven't heard about such wonders, especially designers or architects," he smiles. "I believe that studying such historical architecture should be the basis for young designers." Though he hasn't done any projects in India yet, the mere idea of such an opportunity excites him. "I am sure visiting the country alone would give me new perspectives for interesting fresh designs in the future," he says.

We then cheekily ask who calls the décor shots in a house where the man specialises in interiors? "My wife has an unusual sense of what is 'hot' now. She is working in a different field but I often listen to her opinion about design. She is often an evaluator for many of my design ideas," he shares. That's an innovative way of avoiding clashes, we say. ●