



TRANSFORMATION

# The High Life

With some heavy silk here and some inspiration there, a suburban attic becomes a sumptuous Parisian pied-à-terre

/// BY GRETCHEN WAHL

**D**esigner Frank Ponterio didn't actually put this expansive but low-ceilinged space on a plane to France, but you might think so, to look at it now. Talk about a makeover. As interior designers scouted out rooms to redo for a recent Lake Forest showhouse project, the first words Ponterio heard to describe the gloomy attic were "Don't even go up there! It's haunted!" But as the other designers explored downstairs, Ponterio found himself intrigued by what might be possible up above. Sure, the ceilings were low, the walls slanted, the radiators exposed. Plus, the room looked out onto an unsightly roof. But it was a generous 800 square feet, and through the many-paned casement windows, lovely suburban treetops were visible. Could it become an elegant European-style guest flat atop an American house? *Mais oui!*

*For information on resources, see Buyer's Guide, page 110.*

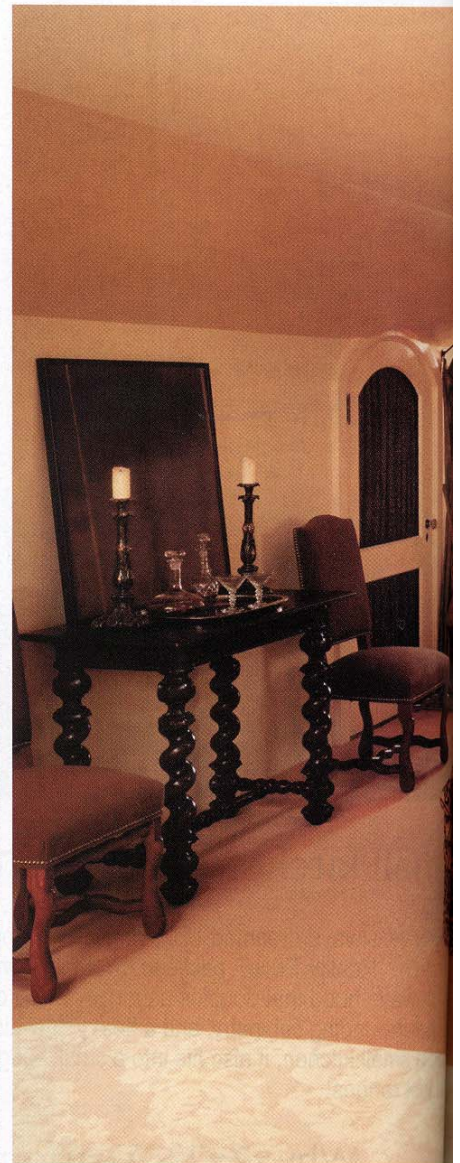


### The Room Needs a View

Bringing the outside in is key to making this space feel open. Ponterio installed a small terrace on the flat rooftop, using a trellis and plantings to hide the house's heating and air-conditioning machinery—but not the sunshine and treetops.

### Art of the Mix

Chinoiserie, French dining chairs, a Spanish end table, and a monochromatic contemporary painting leaned casually against the wall give the room the feeling of a place where art and furniture have been collected over time.



### Luxury Treatments

The great thing about decorating a small space? You can afford truly spectacular materials. The fabrics are all from the Nobilis mill in France. The cast bronze lighting fixtures are fitted with hand-sewn silk. The portières by the doors to the terrace are a heavy silk gauze that billows in the air and pools at the floor.

### Three Large Pieces

Because the ceiling is low (and the room is three stories up), the temptation might be to go with small furnishings. But the space is big, and each section needs to be anchored. An antique secretary, oversized cocktail table, and armoire (not shown) near the bed hold down their respective forts.



BEFORE

### Delineate—Don't Divide

Carefully placed draperies demark the flat's sleeping/dressing area, living area, and study without chopping the room into tiny bits. If you're lying in bed, curtains block your view of the couch behind them, making you feel cozy and protected.

