

SPECIAL HOLIDAY ISSUE

# Town & Country

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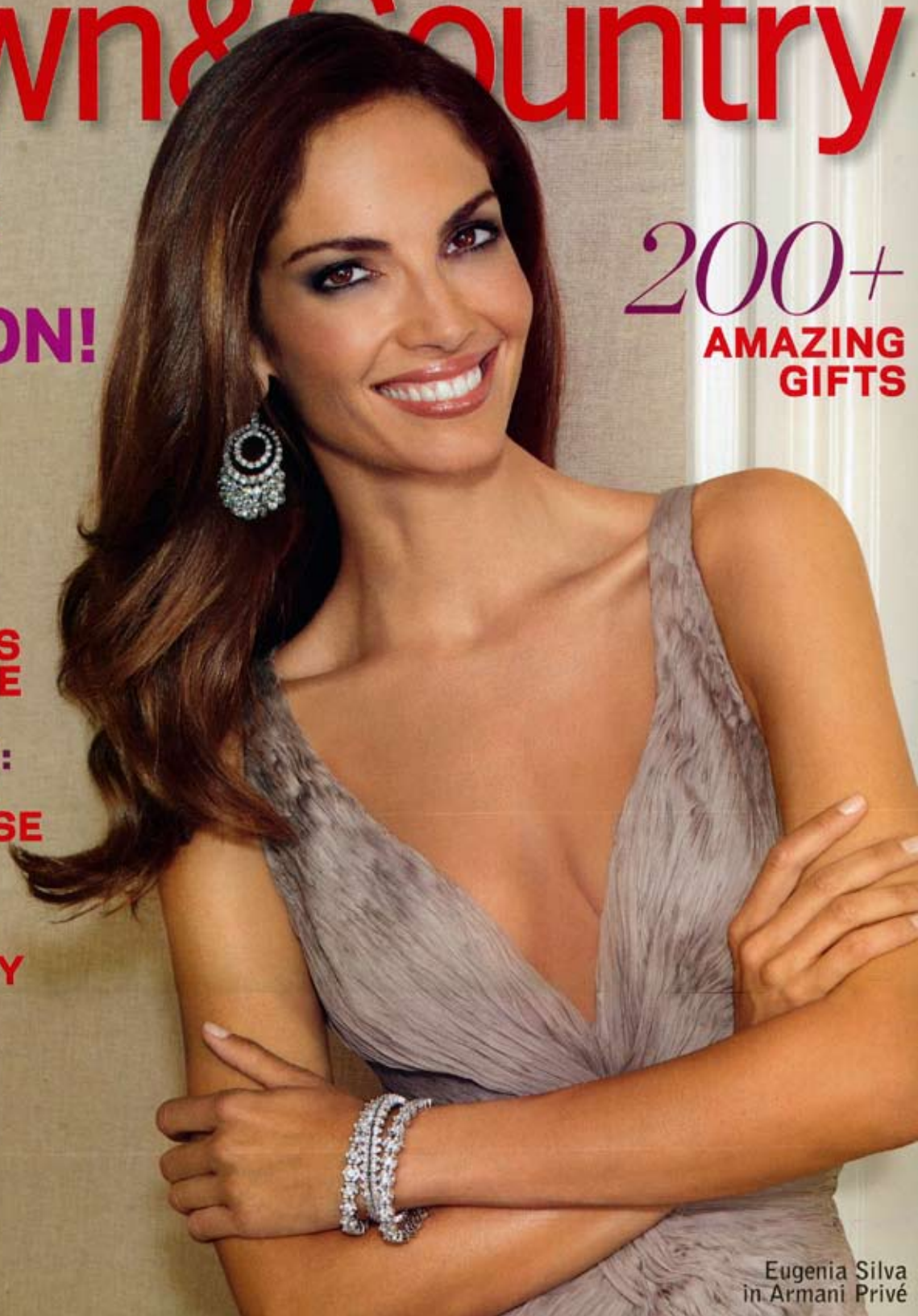
**FASHION:  
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**TRAVEL:  
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# december

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Spanish-born model Eugenia Silva steps out in nine glamorous and versatile outfits, each ideal for a holiday party. *By Melinda Page.*

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Designer Richard Mishaan created a *Town & Country* apartment inspired by a 1933 movie set—but one made for real, modern-day life. *By Sarah Medford.*





# Dinner at Eight



*Town & Country* and Richard Mishaan whip up an apartment that's perfect for a party. *By Sarah Medford*





George Cukor's urbane 1933 film was the stylistic starting point for this New York duplex decorated by Richard Mishaan.

In the dining room, three designs by Tony Duquette—the chandelier for Baker and the fabrics on the chairs and screen for Jim Thompson—are as high-voltage as the vanda orchids on the table. Flowers here and throughout by L'Olivier Floral Atelier. The carpet is from the Rug Company. Opposite: Lalique barware sits on a CB2 tray.

PROPS STYLED BY  
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FRANCESCO LAGNESE

PRODUCED BY  
SARAH MEDFORD AND  
ZOE G. SETTLE







IF ANY FILM deserves a re-release on Blu-ray this Christmas, it's *Dinner at Eight*. Directed by George Cukor in 1933, arguably at the trough of the Great Depression, *Dinner at Eight* is a black comedy about hard times at the high end of New York society; it has, if not quite a happy ending, at least a promising one. The action takes place over the course of one week as a hostess fusses over her dinner-party plans. In a brilliant bit of foreshadowing, the aspic hits the kitchen floor well before the first guests arrive. This being the Depression, the screen churns with washed-up careers, a threatened hostile takeover, marital blackmail, suicide and the demise of a family shipping dynasty—not to mention a social betrayal by Lord and Lady Ferncliffe, the A-list guests who skip town the morning of the party. When the wheel of fortune finally comes to a halt, new money (Wallace Beery and a transfixing Jean Harlow as Dan and Kitty Packard) is on top, old money (Lionel Barrymore and Billie Burke as Oliver and Millicent Jordan) has managed to save face, and both agree to come together around the dinner table. The aspic, a symbol of precrash excess, never makes a comeback.

For every morsel of escapism that *Dinner at Eight* must have served up to struggling audiences, it also delivered some cathartic emotional truths that helped people make sense of a dark time. It was a time darker than our own, unquestionably—but

**The foyer (above) adopts a hushed, old-world attitude thanks to hand-embroidered wallpaper from Fromental, a 1940s Italian chair from Bernd Goeckler Antiques and a resin pedestal by Marc Bankowsky for Maison Gérard. Elie Tahari leopard-print coat; Tumi bag. Opposite: A console table by Mishaan for Bolier grounds an artful composition that includes paintings by Julia Condon, sconces by Hervé van der Straeten, planters by Robert Kuo and objects by Eduardo Garza. The wall color, Atlantic Winter, is from Ralph Lauren Paint, which was used throughout the apartment.**



isn't Cukor's Park Avenue parable still potent today? That's what *Town & Country* thought when we chose *Dinner at Eight* and its razzle-dazzle interiors as inspiration for our latest designer showhouse. Here's a page from our editorial script.

**Scene:** An apartment in downtown Manhattan, summer of 2009. The building is called SoHo Mews. The quaintness of the name contradicts the urbanity of the architecture, circa 2008 by Gwathmey Siegel and Associates, but it does have a cinematic ring.

A camera crew is setting up to photograph the space. At the kitchen counter, a man in a trim blue suit is filling a Lalique decanter to the halfway point with Diet Snapple, then diluting the contents ever so slightly with water until the liquid matches



To convey the Gilded Age tastes of the Jordans in the living room, Mishaan chose a reproduction Aubusson carpet from Stark and had Alpha Workshops paint the walls in a limestone-block pattern. Mishaan designed the sofa (covered in Kravet's Flamme velvet), end tables and slipper chairs; the coffee table and vase are by Robert Kuo; and the bird sculpture is by Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne, courtesy of Paul Kasmin Gallery. The curtains are Ralph Lauren Home's Argentum Weave Silver fabric, the throw is by Pratesi, and the lamps are from Crate & Barrel.











the color of Cutty Sark. He places the decanter on a drinks tray in the dining room, where a chandelier made of hammered metal, abalone shell and crystal droplets shaped like uncut diamonds illuminates a table set for six. He lights the tapers. After adjusting his tie in the powder room, he sits down on a velvet sofa in the living room to talk.

**Casting Note:** The man is Richard Mishaan, of New York City. A movie lover, a practitioner of polished, high-drama decorating, a society fixture and a generally game guy, Mishaan volunteered to dream up a one-bedroom apartment for imaginary clients based on characters from *Dinner at Eight*. Once he had accepted the job, it took six months to plan and ten days to install.

**Town & Country:** Take us back to 1933, decoratively speaking, and talk about the two apartments in the film that inspired you.

**Richard Mishaan:** The thirties marked a high point of modernist thinking in design, but the Jordans' apartment reflects classicism and old-world Europe—the look was popular at the turn of the century, when they made their money. The Packards, on the other hand, are pure nouveau riche. Their bedroom—the only

bit of their home that we see—is five-minute-old Art Deco, a style that we now associate with the height of Hollywood glamour. In other words, both couples live with the trappings of their success, though only the Packards are actually successful at the time the film begins.

**How did you reconcile the different looks?**

I love giving classical forms a modern interpretation in my work, so I drew inspiration from both couples' tastes. But I kept the end result real—my wife and I could move in here tomorrow. Decorating to any one period, as the Packards did, for instance, can quickly date a room. My approach is to create a fusion of styles and periods, which is more reflective of the way we live now because it's more fluid. You can continually update it.

**How did you adapt a traditional scheme to contemporary architecture? This apartment has an open-plan ground floor and four bedrooms upstairs, one of which you've designed for the project.**

I'm not particularly fond of open-plan spaces, so I suggested a dining room by putting up bookshelves and multipanel screens that block views into the kitchen and the library.

And here's a recession-era idea: the whole apartment reflects the importance of getting good value in decorating. We've got high-quality Ralph Lauren paint on the walls and Badgley Mischka fragrances in the bathroom but also reasonably priced folding screens from a company called Oly that we've dolled up by gluing on malachite-patterned fabric from Jim Thompson.

**Is this something Kitty Packard might have gotten out of bed to do in her peignoir?**

Kitty is one of the most hilarious on-screen characters I know. Jean Harlow makes such great fun of herself. Kitty might have had her maid do the handiwork while she took a bubble bath in the Kohler tub. See all those beauty potions in the ice-blue bottles? They're Kitty's, not Millicent Jordan's. And the satin cocktail dresses by Tahari in the closet? Kitty's.

#### OUR SHOWHOUSE SPONSORS

**Elie Tahari:** elietahari.com

**Elizabeth Arden:**

elizabetharden.com

**Karastan:** karastan.com

**Kohler:** kohler.com

**Ralph Lauren Paint:**

ralphlaurenpaint.com

**Scandia Down:**

scandiadown.com





"All good things go together," Mishaan says, "as long as you have a theme." In the library, Art Deco shapes and warm neutral colors are the unifiers. A writing desk by Mishaan looks out onto a ground-floor terrace filled with outdoor furniture by Richard Frinier for Century. The Giacometti-style lamp is by Arteriors. Opposite: Karastan's chic Aberdale Antelope carpet offsets furnishings by Mishaan; plaster wall reliefs from Baker add a neoclassical touch and complement Atlantic Winter walls from Ralph Lauren Paint.









Deco-deluxe decorating stars in a bedroom suite lively enough for Kitty and Dan Packard. Sumptuous linens, a duvet and pillows, all from Scandia Down, outfit the bed, which is covered in Kravet's Versailles velvet. Awaiting Kitty: an Ellie Tahari cocktail dress (on a Jan Showers bench) and sandals, bold against Karastan's Mystical Zebra carpet. A Leleu vanity from Maison Gérard and a chair from Bernd Goeckler Antiques sit at the window beside an Urban Archaeology floor lamp. Opposite: Roxanne Lowit photographs are in Larson-Juhl frames. The chair is from Maison Gérard.





**Give us some more examples of good design value.**

In the living room, the embroidered chinoiserie wallpaper is by Fromental, of England, and the Perry table lamps are by Crate & Barrel. In the bedroom, the amazing torchiere lamps, based on a Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann and Edgar Brandt collaboration, are by Urban Archaeology, and the zebra carpet, which is remarkable quality for its price, is by Karastan.

**You designed some of the pieces here yourself. Which ones?**

The lantern in the foyer and the sconces in the stairwell are from my new lighting collection with Urban Electric Company. Furniture from my own company, Homer, is here, along with some prototypes for an upcoming line I'm doing with Bolier.

**And now that the "set" is complete—your favorite room?**

It would have to be the bedroom. To me it's pure modern luxury. Luxury means editing what you have to build a cohesive room of quality. The bedding is all Scandia Down. The mahogany vanity is circa 1938 by Leleu, from Maison Gérard. The walls have a harlequin pattern; they're a lot to look at with the zebra carpet, but equally powerful patterns can work beautifully together. Not everyone wants demure, you know. That's something Kitty might say.

*You can see more of the Town & Country showhouse at [designer-visiononline.com](http://designer-visiononline.com) and on the prime-time special Cinema Style: Designer Visions, on January 26, at 9:00 P.M. EST, on the Fine Living Network.*



Calling all screen sirens: The master bath, designed by Costas Kondylis Architects, features a Kohler tub, shower, vanity and commode. Glass accents include a Lars Bolander chandelier and bottles from Elizabeth Lyons and the End of History. The bench, by Marc Bankowsky, holds towels by Scardia Down. Opposite, clockwise from top left: An Elie Tahari necklace and a Chanel brooch in a Buccellati dish near a silver compact-style picture frame by Monica Rich Kosann; Prevage and Elizabeth Arden products and Badgley Mischka perfumes to start the day, placed next to Kohler's Margaux faucet; Kohler fixtures in the powder room, where a Rachel Hovnanian print, courtesy of Jason McCoy gallery, hangs on the back wall. For shopping information, see page 160.

