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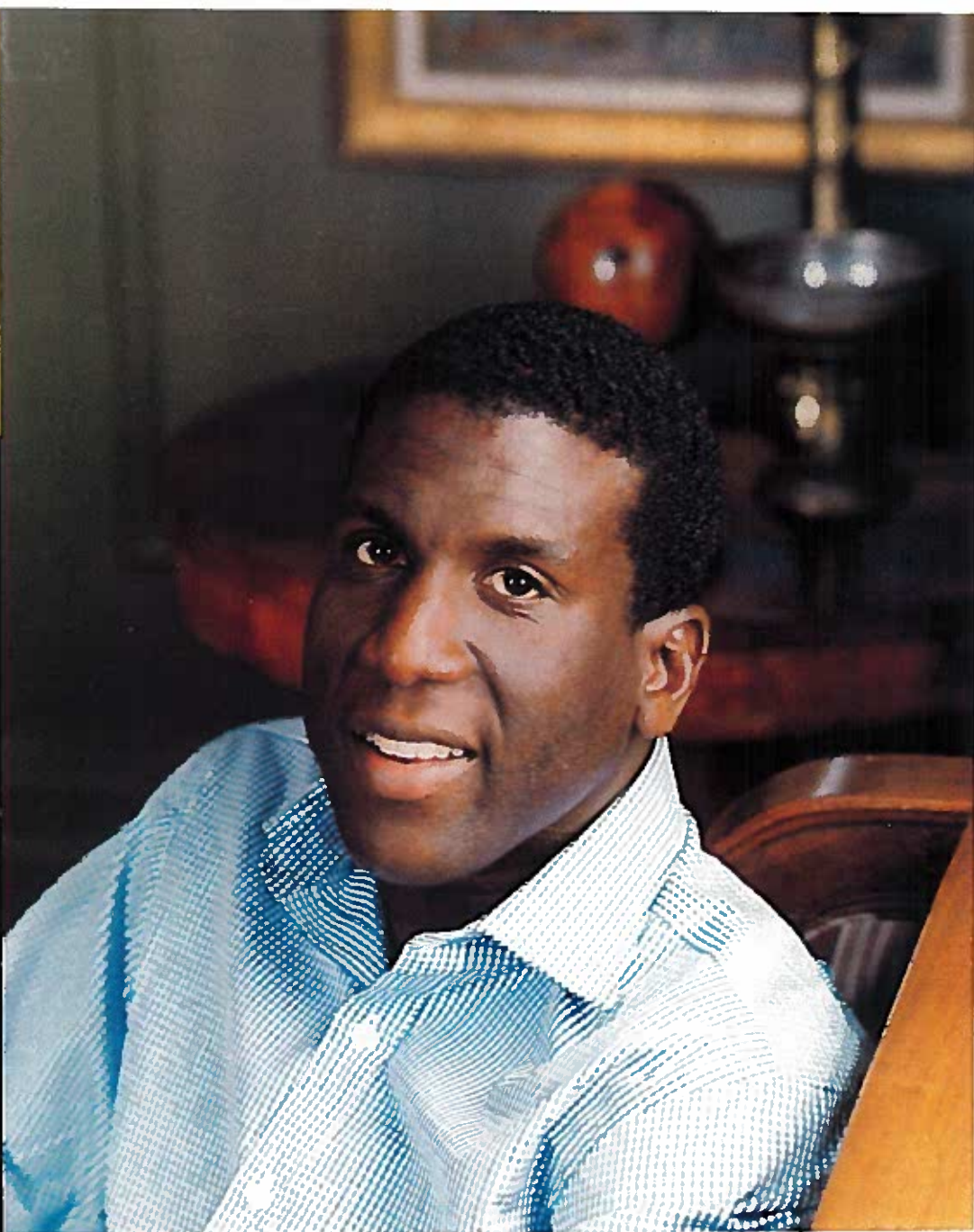
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Right: Warner Johnson in the living room of his New York apartment. Left: The oak bookcase is early 20th century and the sisal rug is from Shella Bridges Design. See Resources.



A landmark residence
restored to
its former grandeur

naissance

Top to bottom: The chairs in the library were bought at auction in upstate New York; the rug is Moroccan. An early-20th-century Chinese table in the front hall.



When Warner Johnson moved to New York after college, he rented an apartment in the West Village, attracted by the area's charm and proximity to his Wall Street job. It wasn't until almost a decade later, after he'd returned from a stint working in Paris, that he began to consider living uptown—way uptown. Intrigued by its rich architectural heritage, he began exploring Harlem, the streets textured with Queen Anne brownstones, neo-Gothic churches, and Palladian civic buildings. He decided to check out the Graham Court Apartments after reading a newspaper article about the history of the building.

The 1901 Clinton & Russell-designed



An early-19th-century etching of Egypt, an Empire chair, and 19th-century French plates in the front hall.



The Directoire
chairs outside
the dining room
are upholstered
in Rogers &
Goffigon linen;
the 19th-century
table is from
Avery on Bond.



A sofa upholstered in Clarence House's Amberline Wool Stripe and Moroccan cane-back chairs in the living room. See Resources.

landmark, commissioned by William Waldorf Astor, occupies a full block on Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard, sometimes called the Park Avenue of Harlem because of the tree-lined median dividing the broad thoroughfare. With an impressive central courtyard and a majestic gateway wide enough for a horse and carriage to pass through, the building is a monument to the area's past prosperity.

When Johnson first visited the 3,000-square-foot space that would eventually become his, the Beaux Arts façade of the Graham Court was still stately, but much of its interior had fallen into disrepair. Chocolate-brown paint coated the Cuban mahogany paneling in the dining room, and the front hall's oak doors were slathered in dingy almond yellow. The white-oak

parquet needed refinishing, and old carpet covered the foyer's marble-mosaic floor. But it just so happens that Johnson, now president of an Internet company, loves dilapidated chic.

He's always had a soft spot for the scuffed and moth-eaten, and he's collected furniture to suit that taste for the past 20 years. "I like orphans," he says of a sofa that had springs poking out everywhere when he bought it. "They should be authentic, but something should be a little off. Just because a piece is worn you don't discard it. It reflects a comfort with living."

His own comfort with living is reflected by a permanent state of slight disarray. Rugs from Morocco and Turkey and a zebra skin from South Africa—treasures collected on his travels—lie haphazardly rather than in the center of the room.



This page: A 1950s pool table in the billiard room.
Facing page: In the master bedroom, paintings from flea markets and a bedspread from Simrane in Paris.
See Resources.

A worn matador's jacket hangs from a scone in the master bedroom, where 19th-century studies of peoples of central and western Africa are positioned crookedly on the wall. "I don't treat things delicately," Johnson says. "I'm not too great about putting out coasters." It's all part of growing up in North Carolina, he explains: "My grandmother's house was a mix of mahogany pieces, an old rocker or country chairs, a mishmash of things on the dresser."

Johnson calls the look "Miss Havisham meets Harlem." In the living room, faded fringed burgundy-velvet Deco armchairs face a pristine pair of Directoire chairs re-covered in wheat-colored linen as part of Operation Fortification, as he refers to his reupholstery campaign. "In the South, money wasn't so important, but there was still a set of manners, a way to conduct yourself," he says. "There was a pride in being

African-American reflected in the houses. There was a dignity to them. Then in Paris, I saw how they mix and match."

To unify his magpie collection and present his classic, ethnic, and oddball finds informally, personally, and tastefully, Johnson had the help of interior designer Edward Cabot, a longtime friend who also has a Graham Court apartment. One of Cabot's suggestions was to paint each room a different bold color, and designer and client went to London to select a dove-gray, Delft blue, Peking yellow, and other rich Georgian hues. The variety, from the olive-green living room to the midnight-blue billiard room, de-emphasizes some of the furniture's wear and tear and accentuates architectural details such as the coved ceiling moldings. "Edward understands me and knows how to place things in context," Johnson says. "My style is very relaxed, but if you try to peg me, watch out—I'll change." 🌟

