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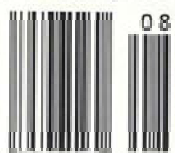


All About PANTS

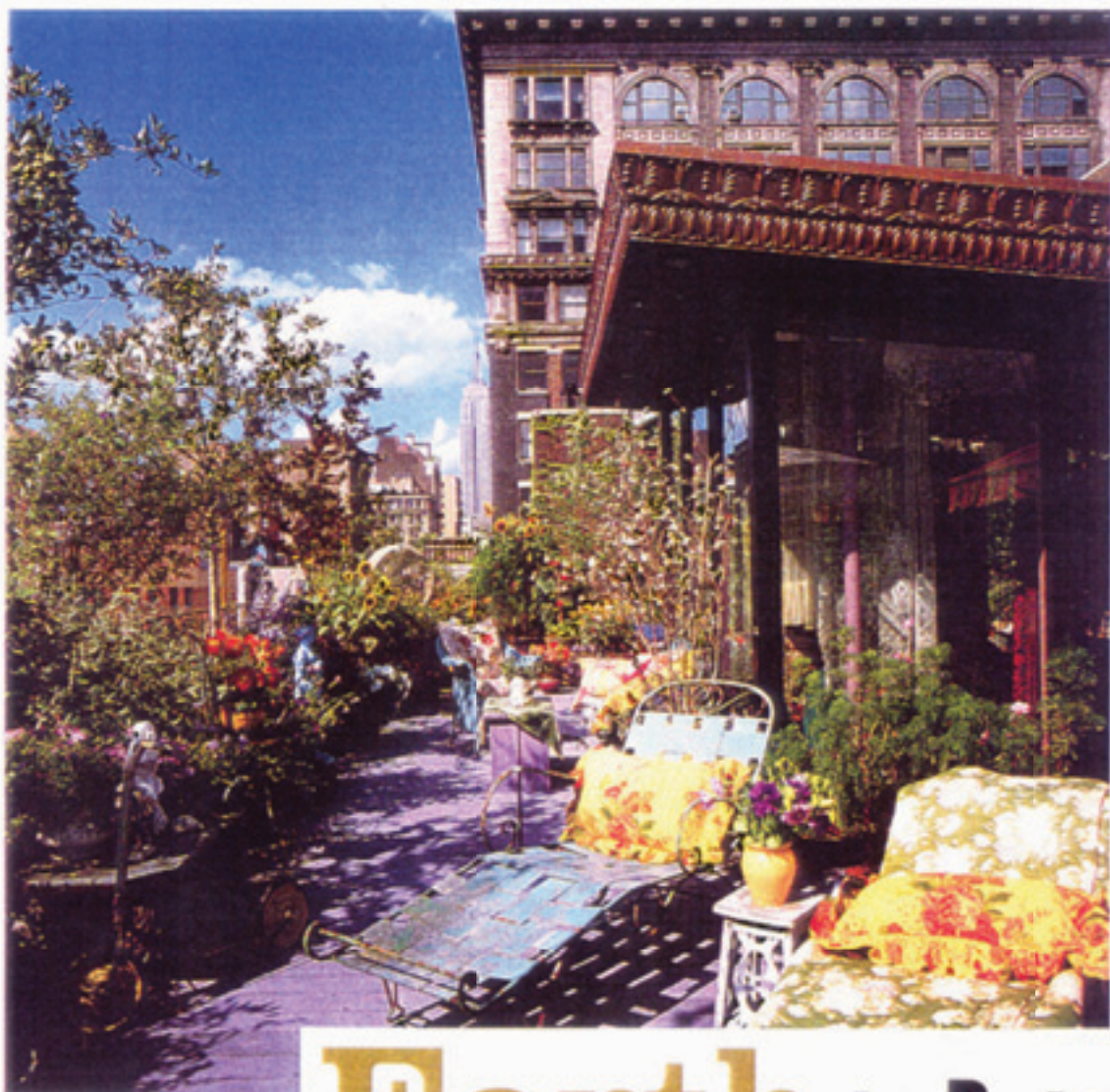
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Earth to Betsey

An exuberant fashion sensibility comes home as Betsey Johnson tops off her Manhattan penthouse with a wraparound garden terrace.

I looked for a year for this little rooftop wonder," designer Betsey Johnson says of the New York duplex she's finally settling into after two years of arduous renovation. It was the huge sun-swathed terrace that really sealed the deal and sent her into high gear. "I wanted that city/country feel," she declares. "I'm really schizophrenic: I like my total city-cement thing, and I like my flowery cornball Doris Day moment. My country house is just a little too far upstate."

This dream house marks the last stage of an apartment odyssey. "I've never had an apartment with a view before," says Johnson, who moved to New York in 1964, leaving behind what she describes as a happy middle-class childhood in Wethersfield, CT. As a *Mademoiselle* contest winner that year, she worked as a guest fabric-editor; after a month at the Barbizon Hotel for Women (Sylvia ▶

From top: Johnson's urban paradise; Johnson, with Miss Summer and Miss Spring statues; the living room, with sunflower-yellow walls.



By Wendy Goodman



Plath's immortalized haunt), she moved into another woman's residence. Later she lived in a fifth-floor walk-up in Brooklyn, an apartment in the Chelsea hotel, a 3000-square-foot loft in Tribeca, and an apartment in the American Thread Building.

The original state of the Greenwich Village penthouse left a lot to be desired, so no holds were barred when it came to the gargantuan renovation job, which she undertook with the help of architectural designer Tarik Currimbhoy, contractor Linda Lyday, and landscape designer Janice Parker. "Betsey is the original flower child," says Lyday. "It was a journey just to see how her design came together on this project. The more ornate, the better. It's not like anything I've ever done before: lavender floors, sunflower-yellow walls, and a glass bedroom that she wanted to be her little palace in the sky."

Walls came tumbling down to open up the rooms of the prewar building, and the roof was resurfaced twice so that it could accommodate Johnson's ambitious garden plan. Bringing the country to the city meant overcoming many obstacles. She began by drawing a big map of her projected garden, divided into five zones.

"She wanted a color-coded garden, and made a diorama to illustrate the progression," says Parker. Johnson's spectacular rooftop now holds an herb garden; a Victorian-rose garden; the "blue" garden, which includes morning glories, clematis, petunias, scabiosas, salvias, and delphiniums; the "cartoon" garden of zinnias, sunflowers,

dahlias, marigolds, cosmos, giant daisies, and geraniums; and a vegetable garden, with peppers, tomatoes, scallions, beets, squash, pumpkins, pole beans, rhubarb, and ruby Swiss chard.

Parker likens creation of a New York rooftop garden to planting a garden by the sea, since they both suffer the same extreme conditions of wind and sun. Pollution compounds the problems in the city. Parker chose varieties of trees that can endure stress, such as crab apple and river birch, and anchored their roots with bricks so they would be safe from the winds whipping around the terrace.

The result is a wild microcosm of Johnson's exuberant and romantic aesthetic. Johnson knows she has found her "temple in heaven" with her rooftop garden. "This," she says happily, "is my resting place."



Clockwise from top: The vegetable garden, with tomatoes, pole beans, and peppers; the outdoor shower; color power—the kitchen table, an antique doll from Johnson's collection, and a curtain made from an antique silk shawl; a garden statue.

