

# INTERIOR DESIGN

NUMBER 2



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LOOK BETTER

text: *craig kellogg* photography: *eric laigne*

# look better naked

The David Barton Gym slogan gets a workout at a New York branch by Studio Soffield









Whenever possible, he avoids plain painted plasterboard. Asked for a living area, he instantly thought, "faced wall covering." David arrived immediately," he recalls. The fuzzy black-and-white brocade pattern also covers walls in the adjacent corridor, where a toche frames a life-size latex sculpture of Michelangelo's David. Flaming reconstituted wood in the corridors is engineered wood with a surface of carbonized larch brushed to reveal virgin springwood. The same planks extend into the basement Platin studio that Seifeld describes as a "Zim dungeon."

The David isn't the only bitch trophy. Almost all Barton's gyms have a Di Smith, and Seifeld suggested housing it inside a giant disco ball. "I don't know why I never thought of that," Barton replied. "I've got one in storage." This



**Opposite page, from left:** Outside the Platin suite, a painted-lath-and-plaster reception of a Norman-style arch sits on French-style planks of engineered wood with a carbonized-larch top layer.

Custom-painted perforations a mile at the living area. **Opposite bottom, from left:** *Julian* (2012) chair occupies one end in the hall between living and the main kitchen; a custom bench with an antique metal support sits just through the central glass doors to the entrance to the room.

**Top:** Using a wall to cut a rectangular opening in a three-foot-thick wall is like a 20-foot *Barthel* lounge pairing couch, upholstered in latex, sits outside the cement kitchen.



help of the Tuesday parties that his wife, "Queen of the Night" Susanne Barthel, used to host at the Happy Valley dance club turned out to be the perfect size to park on a triangular platform left over from the gym's predecessor, Barnes & Noble. The platform is roughly in the center of the wedge-shaped top level, by far the largest of the four.

One corner, the former children's reading room, now features the bench and free-weight circuits that Barton calls the "stinking son of World War II," he explains, that the steel ballet bar around the perimeter keeps the actor a safe distance from the antique heating system set below the huge old windows. "In someone doesn't sit on a hot radiator pipe or fling a dumbbell out." Down the middle of the floor marches a row of structural columns, a

**Previous spread:** At Studio Soefeld's second David Barton gym in New York, a little paint mixed by WilsonDesigns and Art & Design originally covered the wall near the main levels, near the exit, even though it is not visible from the gym.

**Top:** A custom system of linear cut steel structural supports separates the entrance from the gym.

**Bottom:** Heavy but rubber covers the main levels.

**Opposite:** Reception custom linear cut steel structural beams are in place that incorporate components of a billiard table, among these parts.



**Anderson Cooper, Kate Berkus,** and this reporter can't all be wrong. The David Barton Gym rocks. And it's not just the Kiss and T-Rex tracks the Dix spin at the latest New York location while the three of us are working out—separately. At 33,000 square feet of smoky mirror and amber lighting, this gym stands out in a city where health clubs often resemble health clinics. "So many other gyms are about fluorescents and Clinics," interior design Hall of Fame member William Soefeld says. Yes, he lifts here, too. Of his five David Barton Gyms in New York, Miami Beach, Chicago, and Seattle, this one was always destined to be the most personal. He's lived in the neighborhood for decades, and Studio Soefeld is based here.

To David Barton himself, the new location—four levels in a venerable cast-iron building—suggested 1980's punks squatting in an abandoned church. "I'm obsessed with scale and mood," he says, pointing out the window to the rusting fire escapes and heavy black shutters of an ancient courtyard. "I hope they never fix that up." Not that he and Soefeld don't continue to "fix up" the gym interior, an ongoing dialogue. One mural has already been repainted elsewhere for greater visibility, and a pair of highly stylized skeleton chairs disappeared to make way for a track bar.

Soefeld proposed the "bar case" concept for the men's locker room in the subbasement, where contractors ultimately removed tons of useless pipe and outmoded electrical equipment before painting some of the old brick foundation bronze and other parts brown. Both the men's lockers and the women's, on the next basement level up, are walnut-veneer and arranged in bays with vermilion-gilded fluorescents washing the ceiling and a tribal motif on the carpet. The glamour of onyx counters, "underscutes the sleek," he notes. ➤