

Jesses Je

Decorator Joe Lupo gives his business partner, Jesse Garza, the surprise of a lifetime

BY ALYSSA BIRD PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER MURDOCK

s with most successful partnerships,
Joe Lupo and Jesse Garza balance each
other out. "I'll have some crazy idea
that's high in the clouds, and Joe will
make it a reality," says Garza of the
dynamic behind Visual Therapy, the fashion- and brand-consulting
firm the men founded in 1995 after moving from Chicago to New
York together. Early press coverage—including an appearance on
The Oprab Winfrey Shon, where Garza had previously worked as
a freelance stylist—helped the business grow, and now, with three
books, countless clients, and an interiors division, VT Home,
which Lupo launched in 2014, the firm is a one-stop styling shop.

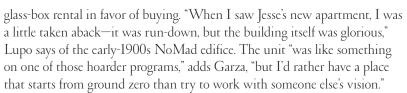
Garza, a former creative director of the now-shuttered boutique Ultimo, and Lupo, who has a background in finance, met in Chicago in 1989 and, after dating for nearly a decade, have remained best friends. And like a true best friend, Lupo wanted Garza to land the perfect home after the latter gave up his glitzy



76 NYC&G COTTAGESGARDENS.COM SEPTEMBER 2017 COTTAGESGARDENS.COM NYC&G 77







Because Garza travels often, Lupo began overhauling the 650-square-foot space with the idea of surprising his friend. He started by opening up the dropped ceiling an entire foot, then removed walls between the kitchen and living room and tucked in a walk-in closet for extra storage. To furnish the newly airy abode, Lupo aimed to ease Garza away from his gray comfort zone, with the goal of making the apartment "feel more homey and less like a hotel room." Although there's still a good bit of gray throughout, it's accented with accessories in warmer tones: a Pierre Jeanneret desk chair, an African tribal mask, a pair of amber floor lamps, and an "Hermès orange" leather ottoman—not to mention an indigo sofa for a touch of drama. Artwork and personal mementos play an important role, too, from a framed invitation to John Galliano's first couture show in Paris to a Robert Motherwell lithograph to a photograph of Diana Ross taken by Garza's friend Victor Skrebneski. So how did the big reveal go? "Eleven weeks was a short amount of time for Joe to make all this magic happen," says Garza. "The apartment sets the tone for who I am and where I'm going." *



