HOME GYMS: FORM MEETS FUNCTION
Pat Manocchia, founder of Manhattan's La Palestra fitness empire, weighs in on why design matters in a home exercise space

Q: Frank Gehry codesigns the newest La Palestra fitness center, at the Plaza Hotel. What are some of its highlights?
A: Frank worked with us to preserve many of the Plaza's historic architectural details, while adding LEDs, an angular staircase, and flooring that ranges from rubber to wood.

Q: What advice do you have for setting up a home gym?
A: Do not put a bike in the bedroom. Separate the gym from the rest of the house. Consider safety: Make sure that machines don't stress the electrical system, and be careful when hanging heavy equipment from the walls.

Q: What are the main components of a well-rounded fitness room?
A: I would include cardio, flexibility, and strength equipment, music or video for entertainment, and an exercise ball. A mirror lets you see what you are doing; it will also spread light throughout the area and make it feel larger. You'll want at least one full-length mirror.

Q: What if you have limited space to devote to exercise?

Q: How do I select a cardio machine?
A: It depends on use. If you exercise five times a week, you will need an industrial-strength machine like a Woodway or Cybex. If you work out only once or twice a week, you can get away with lower-end equipment.

Q: What are your favorite strength strategies for a home workout?
A: I recommend kettlebells. They're small—eight of them in different weights take up no more than three linear feet of space—and can be used for almost every type of movement. If you have a larger area, consider a multi-station workout system with different machines, then add such basics as a bench, dumbbells, and a bar.

Q: Why focus on design in a utilitarian home gym?
A: If the space isn't appealing, you won't use it.

WHAT THE PROS KNOW
From weight training to yoga, here's expert advice on how to sweat in style

JONATHAN FELDMAN / ARCHITECT
"In Mill Valley, California, we designed a yoga room in a forest cabin. We lifted the building off the hillside and placed it on piers to create a tree-house effect. Tall doors and windows open onto a narrow deck. The idea was to fashion a small, cozy place that feels both protected and open to the views beyond." Wood windows and doors, left; sierrapacificwindows.com.

SARA STORY / INTERIOR DESIGNER
"Pops of bright color add energy to a home gym. Try a gold exercise ball or colorful mats, or hang some artwork. For a fitness room in Texas, I installed a blue and yellow Kast cabinet by designer Maarten Van Severen for Vitra to store workout equipment." Kast cabinet, left; vitra.com.

ROBERT STILIN / INTERIOR DESIGNER
"I like to add warmth to a home workout room by mounting framed mirrors instead of the frameless ones you find in most gyms. In an old barn [left], we preserved the original walls and beams to soften the environment. When choosing equipment, I ask my client about his or her needs, then consult a trainer and work with a company like Gym Source"; gymsource.com.

KIT KEMP / HOTELIER
"I have a gym in the garden shed of my London townhouse. To make it fit in with the decor of my home, I placed an antique Persian rug over an exercise mat consisting of foam tiles that lock together like jigsaw-puzzle pieces." SoftTiles 1/2" Interlocking Foam Mats, left; softtiles.com. Also try Norsk Rhino-tee Sport Floor PVC tiles; norsk-stor.com.

WORKING IT OUT
What do actor George Clooney, tennis player Rafael Nadal, and Olympic athletes have in common? They've all trained on gear from high-end Italian fitness firm TechnoGym (technogym.com). The company, which boasts Antonio Citterio as its designer, offers everything from treadmills to its unique Kinesis wall-mounted resistance system, right. The Kinesis range is offered in such luxe finishes as bespoke leather and 24-karat gold leaf.

HEAVY DUTY
Dumbbells are a smart fitness solution when workout space is limited. Philippe Starck's Home/Gym/Office line for Alias includes chromed barbells, left, a jump rope, and a gym mat (allmodern.com). Or, for the ultimate in chic, try Chanel's metal hand weights with calfskin covers (chanel.com).

BY INGRID ABRAMOVITCH