



Interior designer David Kleinberg (left), in his New York City apartment. **Opposite:** In the living room, ornate millwork installed for previous owners was painted a crisp cream and white; the 1937 light fixture is by Swiss architect Max Ernst Häfeli, and the acrylic-and-gouache painting is by Garth Weiser. The Lawson-style club chair is upholstered in a Pierre Frey velvet. For details see Sources.

THE SEVEN-YEAR ITCH

Decorator David Kleinberg has a habit of moving every few years. But his latest place—with lofty ceilings and classical architectural detail—is so elegant, he may never want to leave

TEXT BY DAN SHAW PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC PIASECKI PRODUCED BY ROBERT RUFINO





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Kleinberg realized he had to find another apartment. "I move about every seven years, when it's time to repaint," the meticulous New York City interior designer, known for his luxurious yet uncluttered rooms, says with a wry smile. "If you are going to take all the books off the shelves and everything out of the cabinets, then you might as well pack it all up and move."

Having lived in a series of high-rise glass boxes with what he describes as "Cole Porter views of twinkling bridges," Kleinberg decided he was ready to settle into one of the historic doorman buildings that define the Upper East Side. His real-estate agent suggested a two-bedroom flat in a slender 1925 building with one unit per floor. Turns out Kleinberg vividly remembered the apartment, and the couple who had occupied it some 30 years before. "They were the type of gentlemen who gave smart lunches and had a houseman who wore a white jacket," he recalls. "At the time I was working for Denning & Fourcade, who decorated the place—there were enough curtains to kill you! As a kid I thought that was elegant." The apartment, he learned, had a charmed pedigree: George Gershwin had once called it home. And Kleinberg was impressed with its well-bred details, among them elaborate millwork, marble fireplaces, and a kitchen with a service entrance.

Unlike many contemporaries who would have gutted the place, Kleinberg retained not only the '20s

Above: Artwork by David Bomberg is displayed over a custom-made sofa clad in a Romo fabric, and the bench—designed by Kleinberg's firm, DKDA—is covered in a Dedar linen. **Opposite:** An Italian Directoire table is paired with a Kaare Klint-inspired wing chair upholstered in an Edelman suede. Holly Hunt linen covers the DKDA-designed "bookcase sofa," and the curtains are of a Zimmer + Rohde fabric.





In the study, where linen wall panels are trimmed with nailheads, Edward J. Wormley chairs covered in a J. Robert Scott leather are grouped with a custom-made sectional sofa. Guido Gambone vases stand at the window; the mirror-top side table is a vintage Mark Sciarrillo design, and the carpeting is from Patterson, Flynn & Martin.

Opposite: The entry's ceiling fixture is by DKDA; the French benches and Italian ceramic vessel are from the '40s.





architecture but also some of Robert Denning and Vincent Fourcade's touches, including a chinoiserie dining room that looks like a corner of the Forbidden City. "I am not a person who jettisons everything," says Kleinberg, a veteran of the late, great Parish-Hadley Associates. A modernist who nonetheless values tradition, the designer refurbished the living room's paneled walls and painted them cream and white. "It reminds me of those great rooms in Paris with boiserie and modern furniture," he says of the airy space. At its far end, wing chairs Kleinberg designed flank a 19th-century Italian table that stood in his dining room two apartments ago. "That's where I sit to read the paper on Sunday mornings," he says. "The living room can hold 90 for cocktails, but it's also very cozy for two people to have a drink." The most important purchase for the space, he adds, was the final one—a wacky 1937 corkscrew light fixture that Swiss modernist Max Ernst Haefeli produced for the Kongresshaus in Zurich. "Everyone was telling me to get an antique crystal chandelier, and then I found *this*," says the designer, who discovered it at Kimcherova, a Manhattan gallery.

Kleinberg put his own modern stamp on the small barrel-vaulted entry by hanging a minimalist ceiling light developed from one of his sketches and laying a floor of timber marble, so called for its woodgrainlike pattern. "The apartment does not really have a foyer, so the kitchen counter is basically my front-hall table," he says. And it's not just any counter, but a thick Calacatta gold marble slab laid across expertly refinished vintage stainless-steel cabinets. With little more than a sparkling Erik Höglund candelabra on view, the kitchen feels like a pristine art gallery. "I am very neat—I open my mail



Lacquered chinoiserie panels lend an Eastern atmosphere to the dining room; the chairs are covered in a Dedar fabric, and the cowhide rug is from Patterson, Flynn & Martin. *Opposite, clockwise from top left:* The kitchen's stainless-steel cabinets are offset by Calacatta gold marble counters; the refrigerator is by Sub-Zero. The Saarinen table in the kitchen is by Knoll; the candelabra is by Erik Höglund, and the flooring is faux-wood tile by Ann Sacks. Curtains of a Jim Thompson silk frame a dining room window.



Kleinberg's custom-made bed is topped with an E. Braun & Co. coverlet. The carpeting is from Patterson, Flynn & Martin; the Moroccan-style rug is by Doris Leslie Blau. *Opposite, clockwise from top left:* A painting by Dozier Bell hangs above a linen-covered sofa in a corner of the master bedroom; the chair is clad in velvet. Striped marble sheathes the master bath; the '30s chair is by Jean-Charles Moreux, and the towels are by Waterworks. The oak-lined dressing room.



over the trash can," Kleinberg says. "I don't cook, but I have had caterers here, so I know the kitchen works."

Which brings up the subject of the dining room, and those extravagant gold-and-brown lacquer panels with bas-relief evocations of vases bearing cherry branches in full bloom. "I would never choose them myself, but it just felt right to keep them," Kleinberg explains of the exotic Denning & Fourcade installation, obviously bemused to be contradicting his professional reputation for subdued interiors. "I respect the workmanship. There are cabinets behind the panels to store everything. It's like living in someone else's apartment, but, weirdly, I like it." The mirrored ceiling in the hall leading to the bedrooms is another Denning & Fourcade relic. "It is not something I would have done myself, but it works," Kleinberg says. What didn't work, however, was his plan to upholster the study's sectional sofa in army-green flannel. Not enough flannel could be found for the job, so he used some for the cushions and trim and covered the rest of the sofa in natural linen. Which, he says, was a good solution in retrospect: "Otherwise it would have looked like two Jeeps were parked in the room."

The only area of the apartment that was reconstructed to Kleinberg's specifications was the master suite, the recipient of an oak dressing room and a new bath encased in jauntily striated gray marble. "I didn't want it to look prewar," he says. "I like a bathroom to look clean and modern." A striped fabric covers the master bedroom walls, with matching curtains. "It's cohesive, calm, and absorbs sound," Kleinberg observes. Tellingly, the textile also means the room won't need to be repainted. As the designer says, "I feel like I have finally landed someplace I could stay a long time." □

