



# HIGH-MINDED

A new apartment, for a New York-based designer, has led to a new direction for his simple, classic style

TEXT CAROLINE SEEBOHM  
PHOTOGRAPHS FRANCESCA SORRENTI

ABOVE New York from David's apartment. OPPOSITE A painting by Morris Graves hangs on the low wall that now separates the entrance from the sitting room

New York makes huge demands on its inhabitants. But if you are one of the lucky ones, there are rewards. Manhattan offers the high-rise-apartment dweller the opportunity to bask in brilliant light, while enjoying unparalleled views of the city and its skyscrapers, which shimmer in the sun by day and sparkle like Christmas trees at night.

'I didn't start out in one of these places,' confesses interior designer David Kleinberg, as he looks with faint bemusement at the staggering panorama outside his twenty-eighth-floor apartment windows. 'I used to live in a second-floor apartment with a lot of prewar charm but absolutely no natural light.'

David lived in this comfortable and,

in American terms, old-fashioned place for sixteen years, until one day in 1997 he woke up and decided, 'If I don't see the sun I'm going to lose my mind.' At about the same time he resigned from Parish-Hadley, the legendary design firm where he had worked for sixteen years, and started out on his own.

A double change of scenery of this sort might have alarmed a less easy-going character, but David says that both decisions came naturally. 'I don't think of myself as an impulsive person. Yes, it was a little scary leaving Parish-Hadley after so long. But I had accumulated a list of clients by that time and everybody was completely supportive. It was the right thing to do.'

The move from a prewar apartment to

a modern glass box was equally timely. 'I was ready,' he said. 'For a lark, I went to look at one of the really expensive apartments in the Olympic Tower, the definitive glass-box building. I looked round it and thought, 'I could live in a place like this.'

The one-bedroom apartment he

settled on, high in a building opposite the United Nations on the city's east side, is not far from his new offices. The windows face north towards Central Park, east towards the river and the 59th Street bridge, and to the west, where the view is dominated by the stark shape of the Citicorp building. Taking the views as the

focal point of the apartment, David set about transforming the 115 square metres of featureless rooms, wall-to-wall shag-pile carpets and dark paint.

His first decision was architectural—to install a low wall opposite the front entrance to the apartment. This partition created a small hallway, and broke

up space that otherwise rushed the visitor unceremoniously from the front door straight into the sitting room. This new wall did not, however, interrupt the view from the new hallway through the sitting-room windows. His other changes to the living area were cosmetic, such as painting everything white, and

adding cornices, skirting boards and track lighting.

In the bedroom, David transformed what he describes as a 'boxy space' by building a low, square arch of 'rusticated' MDF panels, over the head of the bed. He also added a cornice and a window seat. Off the corridor outside the bed-

room, he replaced a cupboard with a cloakroom that he deemed necessary, even in this small apartment. 'I don't like strangers going into my bathroom,' he explains.

In the kitchen, David replaced the old appliances with an elegant, streamlined stainless-steel oven, sink and worktops.



**BOTH PAGES** The sitting room is filled with pieces by contemporary artists and designers, including leather-covered chairs by Ed Wormley, Dozier Bell's painting above the sofa, and the ring-shaped bronze sculpture by Bruno Romeda, which sits on the Royère coffee table. David himself designed the sofa and matching chair, and the hand-painted silk cushion covers. An outsize vase by Svend Hammershoi for Herman Kahler stands on a French Forties table; the luxurious, ribbed carpet is by Patterson, Flynn Martin



He refaced the cupboards in wood, and added a new floor of cork tiles. An experienced cook, however, would take one look and immediately ask, 'Where's the extractor hood over the stove?' In fact, in this inviting new kitchen, no cooking ever takes place. 'I just had to redo the kitchen,' David Kleinberg explains, 'even though I never, ever cook.'

Most of the furniture in the apartment is new; David designed several pieces himself, such as the mahogany bookcases, sofa and chairs in the sitting room, and the leather bench in the bedroom. He chose twentieth-century pottery and sculpture as decorative pieces, in keeping with the architecture; the only nod to the past is his collection of mid-nineteenth-

century chairs, which he brought with him from his old apartment. 'I can't help collecting chairs.'

So how does it feel to move from a cosy, dark, second-floor apartment filled with painted Italian furniture, Beidermeier pieces and nineteenth-century furnishings to a glittering, sky-high space as urbane and minimal as this one? 'I grew up in a very traditional family environment on Long Island,' he explains, 'so it was a great opportunity finally to do something completely different. I have a few of my old things here, but basically I am now committed to this new way of life. It's like living on the edge of the world.' And what do his clients, accustomed to his more

traditional environment, make of it? 'My clients think of my interiors as having a clean, classic look that is very tranquil,' David replies, 'and I am quite happy with that assessment.' He moves to the window and gazes out at the skyline. 'Of course, this is more modern than usual for me,' he concedes. 'One must always respond to the architecture of the place. That is why it has been such a marvelous experience.' So much so that David has now bought a new glass box, with more space and even more spectacular views, into which he plans to move next year □

*David Kleinberg Design Associates, 330 East 59th Street, New York, NY 10022 (tel: 00-1-212-754 9500, e-mail: dk@dkda.com)*

OPPOSITE The bedroom (above) has a light, elegant feel; a painting by Joe Andoe hangs above a bench by David Kleinberg. The view from the bedroom window (below left). Beside the bed (below right) are a nineteenth-century ebony chair and a Fifties desk. THIS PAGE Wall lights in David's bedroom are by Phoenix Day