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# House Beautiful

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WHAT'S NEW WHAT'S NEXT 2010

# MODERN WARMER!

A FASHIONABLE NEW CUT FOR MANHATTAN LIFE BY DAVID KLEINBERG

Interior design by  
DAVID KLEINBERG

Interview by  
CHRISTINE PITTEL

Photographs by  
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The paneling in the library of this New York apartment is inset with bronze in a square motif, echoed by Roger Thibier's gilded coffee tables. A Chanel-style sofa is covered in Classic Cloth's Kansas. OPPOSITE: The long view through an enfilade of bronze-and-glass doors makes the apartment feel larger. "I used a neoclassical motif on the doors because of its strong graphic quality, which strikes me as very modern," says designer David Kleinberg. Diego Giacometti's bronze-and-glass console is flanked by a pair of 1940s French chairs.



Q

CHRISTINE PITTEL:

Those doors! Talk about drama. They're almost as tall as the ceiling.



A

DAVID KLEINBERG:

They are tall—like eight and a half feet. We raised the doorways as high as they could go. I wanted something that had real weight and presence, so I got the idea of doing them in bronze and glass. >>



ABOVE: Two comfortably curved chairs covered in Fortuny's Sèvres complement the 1940s French furniture in the living room. A 1937 French mirror by Pierre Lardin hangs over the fireplace. The tall mantel, faced in bronze, "is sort of the Empire waistline in the room and tricks you into thinking the ceiling must be higher," Kleinberg says. Turkish-style ottoman in Edelman's Royal Suede. OPPOSITE: "A sofa should be a good anchor but not necessarily the bell that rings in the room," says Kleinberg, who covered a Regency-style sofa in mushroom-colored velvet, to work with the velvet already on the vintage Jallot armchairs. The 1940s French coffee table was part of the owners' collection.

**Bronze? That's not something you normally see in an apartment. Why bronze?**

It's tactile. It's warm. It's luxurious.

**I know, but—**

You're right. It was a leap. I guess I just sort of flew into left field.

**They must be extremely heavy.**

We had to put steel supports in the wall to hold them up so they're properly balanced. But they're just as easy to open and close as a regular door. It's not like, oh my God, I have to push my way through.

**And the way they open from room to room to room...**

In Paris, almost every apartment is organized like this, as an enfilade. I prefer a room that you can get in and out of in more than one way. I don't like going into a room and having to turn around to leave it. And even when they're closed there's light coming through—it's so hard to get light into the middle of an apartment.

**I really do feel as if I'm in Paris, and it's not just the doors.**

It's the furniture. Most of it is mid-century modern French. That's what the owners wanted, but I've always been drawn to it, too. Those designers looked back at great 18th-century furniture and reinterpreted it in a modern way. That to me is interesting. It's sort of what I try to do now.

**How are you doing that here?**

Look at the living room. It's traditional, and yet I think it's very much of today. You've got softness at the windows, a balance of wood and upholstery, a neutral palette—and then that infusion of acid green on those chairs. We went to and fro on the color, but we always knew the fabric was going to be Fortuny. Fortuny is never wrong. It's a classic. It's just right. That's all I can say.

**Isn't it sort of daring to be traditional today?**

Maybe it is. You're probably right. But I think it's going to become less daring very soon. We've come through a period where everyone is trying to be surprising and clever, but, frankly, people are getting tired of that. You don't have to put on a party hat to be the

most interesting person at dinner. There's this free-for-all eclecticism that can be jarring, I think. The fact of the matter is, everything doesn't go together. I'm sorry, but it just doesn't. I've always adhered to the same principles—proportion, suitability, comfort. They may sound old and clichéd, but they



still work. There's a youthfulness to this apartment, and yet a sense of permanence. I guess that's always what I'm aiming for. I don't like it to feel temporary. When people ask me what the trends are, or the new direction in decorating, I really don't know because I'm not really concerned.

**Whoa! That's blunt.**

The only thing I'm interested in that's coming back is very good mass-manufactured furniture, like Vladimir Kagan's. It was beautifully made, and it has integrity. But this fascination with the '70s—I lived through the '70s, and it wasn't all beautiful.

I'm just not going to go for bright red molded plastic furniture.

**At first glance, I thought you had painted a kind of op art grid in the library. What is it?**

We wanted a paneled library, but we didn't want traditional wood paneling, the expected thing. It's also not a very big room, so we did it in white squares, which is a much more modern idea of paneling. And then to make it more interesting, that dark line is an inset of bronze. It refers back to the bronze door. That was an important element, as far as I was concerned.

**Why?**

There has to be an overriding visual connection. I always think about how you travel through an apartment. There are visual memories you carry, even if you don't realize it. I don't like things to look too much like a pastiche, like this is a modern room and that's a Chinese room and this is a chintz room. You see how even the motif of the paneling squares is repeated in the little glass coffee tables.

**How does color play into that?**

I've kept to neutral, earthy tones, with a couple of departures—that unanticipated acid green in the living room, and the turquoise in the bedroom. The colors are kind of related, like co-conspirators.

**The bed has the boldest pattern.**

Totally. To me, in a bedroom, the bed's the point. So have at it.

**Back to one last door—and it folds.**

It's a movable screen between the kitchen and family room. The mother can open it while she cooks and be part of what's happening in the family room, or close it and you have a completely traditional arrangement of rooms. There's a dining table in the family room, so it also serves as the dining room. Multipurpose rooms—that's what everybody wants these days.

**So you have a dining room when you want it.**

Exactly. How many people use a formal dining room every day? There's a table in the kitchen, and when you have little kids, that's where you're going to be. Although, as every wife has told me, 'My kids don't drop as much food on the floor as my husband.'



**ABOVE:** A vintage carved oak mirror acts as the focal point of the dining area. Dining table by Eugene Printz. **OPPOSITE:** Folding doors between the family room and the kitchen can be moved to connect or separate the rooms. The upper portion is made of fabric sandwiched between glass. "A piece of glass with shirred fabric behind it would be the traditional way to do it, but this feels more contemporary," Kleinberg says. Glass and steel table by Michel Guino.



"Hanging pictures is an art—and a lot of measuring," says Kleinberg, who arranged these drawings to form a larger rectangle. The bed is upholstered in Nancy Corzine's Orlean. Bedding by Chaz Stevens. OPPOSITE: Dark walls make a small guest bathroom look larger. "It obscures the boundaries. And it's more glamorous. Liquid wax gives the brown paint depth—and it's easier than glazing." The bronze-and-marble vanity with P.E. Guerin fixtures picks up the bronze theme that runs through the apartment. 1950s chiseled glass mirror by Max Ingrand. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES