

Shelter







Sexy Sophistication

Somewhere between swank modernism and early 19th century antiques lies the streamlined urbanity of Glenn Gissler's perfect New York City bachelor pad

Text: Lisa Vincenti Photography: Steve Gross & Sue Daley



The twin-towered, pre-World War II Normandy, located in Manhattan's Upper West Side, may not immediately spring to mind when imagining the quintessential space for a bachelor to hang his cap. But what this grand apartment building may lack in downtown chic or loft-like living, it more than makes up for with romantic sunsets across the Hudson River and plenty of exceptional architectural details.

Emory Roth had cemented his reputation with the city's first residential skyscraper, the 42-story Ritz Tower at 57th Street and Park Avenue, and in doing so spent years perfecting the classic-inspired/Art Moderne hybrid. The Normandy, considered among the architect's very best efforts, was meant to reflect the changing lifestyle of the nation's elite, combining traditional Italian Renaissance forms with new Art Moderne elements. Details like half-round dining rooms, rounded exterior corners and, likewise, rounded casement windows, marble mosaics, obelisks on the 18th and 19th floors and red Mission tile roofs with copper lanterns capping the peaks created a structure that spoke to the future while still referencing the past. Thus when designer Glenn Gissler was commissioned to help a single male set up house in his two-bedroom apartment, it made perfect sense to take the lead established by Roth more than six decades ago.

With a few "architectural corrections"—such as stripping out some picture moldings to clean up the walls and moving a misplaced closet—out of the way, Gissler set to work within the confines







of the existing 1,250-square-foot framework. At the time, the client, an Ivy League lawyer ready to settle down, was willing to start from scratch ... well, almost. A Renaissance man of sorts, who liked the guitar as much as a fine bottle of wine, the owner possessed a small but growing collection of contemporary and vintage black and white photographs, and an affinity for the color blue. Those factors coupled with the architectural language of the residence came into play when Gissler began spinning his design tale, one that hung on a low color/high contrast plot.

"Modern, and the way people use it, is as much a trap as any period style," says Gissler. "I wanted a modern feeling because the guy that lives there is modern, but when you create a setting that is exclusionary, it doesn't allow for the realities of people's personal histories—and western civilization." The client is a man of varied interests, an admirer of old and new, the refined and the industrial, and the finished interior became a visual metaphor for his tastes, Gissler says. Thus, to loose the confines of a strict modern design without causing any aesthetic discord, Gissler culled inspiration from the late 20th century, art deco from the '30s and '40s (Gissler steers clear of Deco with a capital A and D, preferring less overt pieces), and the 19th century. Furniture includes contemporary sources, such as Donghia and custom designs by Gissler, as well as antique items. The dining room, for instance, brings together a 20th century Viennese sideboard with nickel fittings, a Michael Graves chandelier and Ward Bennet chairs. Meanwhile, in the nearby living room, a









pair of Robsjohn-Gibbings Klismos chairs and a Thebes stool rest alongside a 19th century English desk.

Against a backdrop of neutral colors punctuated by the sculptural lines of the furnishings, Gissler began filling in the design. Like the diverse range of furniture, the decorative objects also pulled from several eras: Eye charts from the early 1900s create a strong visual in the curved dining area, as does the contrast between a Nan Goldin photograph and a vintage 1940s fashion image hanging above the sideboard. Even an antique quill box from the 1800s and Chinese ceramics have been seamlessly woven into the bachelor's apartment. Color was discreetly added by small touches, like the pillows on the living room sofas, the vivid oil painting by Naomi Kremer hanging in that room and its navy drapery.

"The goal was to create a comfortable environment with enough art and objects to capture the interest of the eye," says Gissler, who takes a half-full, half-empty approach to his work. He likes his finished designs to be complete enough to look as though someone has been living there a while, but empty enough that inhabitants can add elements to the design over time without the space becoming overly full.

The finished oeuvre is thoughtfully masculine and sleek. Sexy—too sexy, notes the designer of his ultimate bachelor pad. Gissler may have been right. It turns out this single male has since been snared, hook, line and sinker ■ *Glenn Gissler Design, 36 East 22nd Street, New York, NY 212.228.9880*