

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

A WARM AND MODERN NEW YORK CITY APARTMENT

A combination of midcentury, Japanese, and Art Deco influences brings a welcoming intimacy to a sprawling Manhattan residence

Text by Rob Haskell | Photography by Pieter Estersohn | Produced by Howard Christian

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Ask Drew Katz to describe his New York City apartment and he reels off a crisp, confident line: "Midcentury modern with a touch of George Nakashima and Paul Evans." But Katz is the first to admit that before he commissioned this luminous aerie above the commercial hubbub of SoHo, he couldn't distinguish Nakashima from Noguchi. "I didn't know anything," says Katz, who heads the company Interstate Outdoor Advertising (billboards, bus shelters) as well as the Drew A. Katz Foundation, which supports a broad range of charities. "Now I find myself talking about

grillage.”

Katz owes his design education to architect Edward Siegel of Cooper, Robertson & Partners and decorator Ernest de la Torre, the two men who renovated the large duplex he now shares with his wife, Rachel, an attorney. Originally constructed some 12 years ago, the apartment sits atop a storied building that, during the neighborhood’s art heyday, was home to such pioneering galleries as Leo Castelli and Sonnabend. But what Katz purchased was basically raw space, decidedly lacking in character. Despite offering sensational views and an enviable 3,000 square feet of outdoor areas, it was badly in need of “a remediation effort,” as Siegel delicately puts it.

“I wanted to inject it with some of the feel of the original loft building beneath it,” the architect says, “but Drew wanted two bedrooms, and he wanted something warm and inviting.” For the lower floor, Siegel mapped out a series of small rooms—a foyer, kitchen, guest room, and study—all surrounding a great room with living and dining spaces that open onto a broad, east-facing terrace. Upstairs, he created a master suite with a giant sun deck, and above that, on the rooftop, an outdoor living room complete with a fireplace. Oh, and there’s even a hot tub on the mezzanine-level terrace.

When Katz asked for warmth, the architect turned to the *ryokan* of Japan, where he has traveled extensively. The traditional inns, he notes, “are so touched with nature that you can’t help but adore them.” Siegel used Japanese grillage, with its orderly timber latticework, as a unifying motif throughout the apartment. Not merely decorative, the crisscrossing slats and fins variously filter light and provide privacy.

Though a French Art Deco specialist himself, De la Torre brought in primarily midcentury furnishings—some heavily influenced by Japanese minimalism. “Drew said he wanted modern but very comfortable,” the designer says. “Deco’s an interesting way to get to modern and comfortable, but I didn’t think it fit Drew’s personality. The 1950s work better since he’s young.”

Because they couldn’t always find what they were looking for—or, occasionally, couldn’t agree—Katz and De la Torre commissioned a number of bespoke pieces. “The terrific thing about Drew is that he’s game,” the decorator says. “The question was always, What can we create?” When Katz rejected a Willy Rizzo cocktail table that was chosen to anchor a sitting area, De la Torre called a contact in Tahiti who fashioned a table in the wavy form of Alvar Aalto’s iconic vase, with sides covered in mother-of-pearl. For the dining area, both men admired a particular Verner Panton chandelier, but it was too small to hang above the long African bubinga-wood table. At Katz’s suggestion, they had a light made—a marvel

assembled in London consisting of hundreds of glass spheres handblown in Venice. “For the right thing, Drew was always willing to wait,” De la Torre says.

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