



HOW I LIVE IN NEW YORK NOW

With a designer sister, an art-collecting partner, and an e-mail inbox filled with inspiration, Associate Editor **JOE HARPER** details how his interior designer combined these voices into his new Flatiron District penthouse.

We started with what we had. And after dumping the stuffy antiques and cheap placeholders from our respective apartments, my partner, Mark Stephanz, and I didn't have much when we moved into our loft in New York City's Flatiron neighborhood last year. I had grown out of my East Village apartment, and Mark, an executive at Bank of America, was eager to move to livelier downtown after years on the Upper East Side. "I went to Mark's former place to get a sense of his aesthetic," Gary Simko, our interior designer, recalls. "Most of it was traditional, but then I saw the den with seminal midcentury pieces and contemporary furniture. I got excited." Mark told Gary how Andrew Cogan, a longtime friend and CEO of midcentury powerhouse Knoll, had introduced him to the brand's classics and he'd fallen in love, leading to a shopping spree evident across the den—and giving Gary the essence of Mark's design mindset.

On my end, I wanted to make sure my sister Virginia Harper, an industrial designer, had some of her furniture—a bench for DDC and

A Paul Reed painting adds color to the dining area, above. In the living room, below, Knoll D'Urso swivel chairs sit on a Holly Hunt rug. For details, see page 211.





Poltrona Frau nesting tables are placed next to a Modernica bed in the master bedroom, *left*. The grass cloth wall covering is from Phillip Jeffries, and the rug is Holly Hunt. On the deck, *above*, an Artemide sconce lights up the rain shower from the Outdoor Shower Company. The master bedroom, *below*, opens onto the deck, where Brown Jordan furniture surrounds a Knoll coffee table. The leather swivel chair inside is also from Knoll.

tables for Poltrona Frau—used in the home. Gary is practically family; he taught me everything I know about the field long before I began covering design myself (as he is wont to remind me) and even attended Virginia’s wedding. So this, along with our shared appreciation for modernism, made him the obvious choice for renovating our new, three-bedroom duplex. Mark agreed. “I’ve seen his other interiors,” he says, “and love how he somehow puts so much power into uncluttered simplicity.”

Our shared hunt for an apartment lasted four months. That’s short given Mark’s adamancy on an outdoor area, nobody living above us, and adequate space for frequent entertaining. In the living room, Gary built around the few pieces we had, mixing contemporary works such as a Deconstructivist Egg Collective coffee table with an elegant Maxalto sofa from B&B Italia, while leaving space for future art acquisitions. (Mark has a longtime penchant for midcentury abstract paintings; our collection includes works by Paul Reed, Dan Christensen, and Stanley Boxer.) Architecturally, Gary designed the apartment around a central core clad in floor-to-ceiling panels of black walnut. It includes a bar in the foyer, a concealed television over the fireplace, pocket doors, storage closets throughout, and—with Mark’s three kids living here part-time—a wall bed and drop-down desk in the den. “Aesthetically, it elevates the interior walls to a focal point while visually enlarging the first level,” says Gary. “But it also creates space-saving solutions and multipurpose rooms.”

Upstairs, the master bedroom opens onto a rooftop deck of white cedar walls and Brazilian ipe wood flooring. Gary created an extension to the interior; there’s a grill, refrigerator, sink, dining space, and lounging area. My favorite element? The outdoor shower, just steps from our bedroom, which I use year-round, even when snow is falling. “We equate outdoor showers with travel and adventure,” Mark likes to tell people. “So we brought the adventure home.” ♦



BOTTOM, FROM LEFT: DDC; POLTRONA FRAU



ALL IN THE FAMILY My sister Virginia Harper spends most of her days as a design director for Estée Lauder, but she also maintains her own practice. The Zenzero bench, *left*, for DDC was made using reclaimed wood (\$19,460; ddcnyc.com), and her nesting Hudson side tables for Poltrona Frau are highly versatile (from \$2,950 for the set; poltronafrau.com).

