



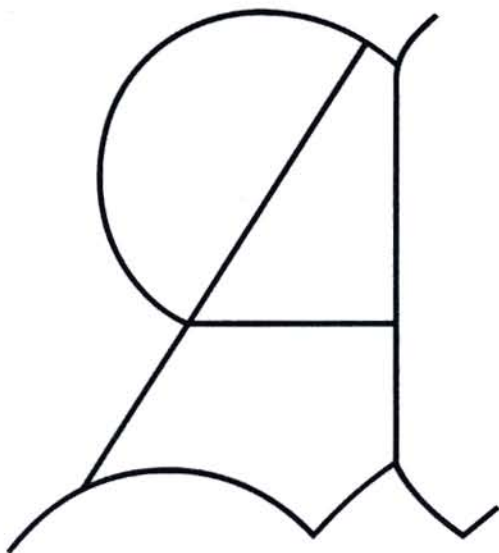
My Space

FOR THE ARCHITECT ANNABELLE SELLDORF, THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME.

TEXT BY ALIX BROWNE PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY COTSIFAS

PERSONAL EFFECTS THE SITTING AREA, OPPOSITE, AND A DESK, BELOW, IN THE LIVING ROOM OF ANNABELLE SELLDORF'S NEWLY RENOVATED NEW YORK APARTMENT. HER TASTE IN FURNITURE RUNS THE GAMUT FROM MING DYNASTY TO MODERNIST.





AMONG THE MYRIAD PROJECTS in which the architect Annabelle Selldorf has recently been engaged — a new gallery for Barbara Gladstone, a municipal recycling plant in Brooklyn, Abercrombie & Fitch's Tokyo flagship — are two residential buildings in Chelsea. "They are both nice buildings with nice floor plans," Selldorf says somewhat modestly of 520 West Chelsea and 200 11th Avenue, a project that has gotten a lot of attention in particular for its drive-in elevator and private parking garages on every floor. "I almost considered moving into one of them myself." But for Selldorf, the few universals in architectural design — space, proportion, light — are always tempered by context and use. And in her own case that meant that at the end of day, a nice floor plan wasn't enough to lure her away from her current neighborhood, with its proximity to the Union Square Greenmarket and, no less significant, to her office. Ironically, it's living 11 blocks from work that allows Selldorf, who puts in long hours and travels constantly, to be able to spend any time at home at all.

So instead of moving, last year she bought the apartment next door to hers and conducted a full-scale renovation, combining the two and increasing her space by a third. The two-bedroom apartment, which she moved back into over the summer, is not intended to be a calling card for her architectural practice — though there is certainly plenty of Selldorf in the details. "It's a big statement," she concedes, "except that it's a statement only for me. It's my own private Idaho."

The generous proportions of the rooms are classic Selldorf. What was previously her kitchen is now the bathtub annex of a palatial master bathroom, and what was once the second apartment's living room is now her kitchen. "The thing that interests me the most in my own work is proportion," she says, adding that it is both logical and intuitive. "Typically, what I do is make clear rooms."

In terms of décor, the apartment is an exercise in the elegance of restraint: "I have more space now and a lot less stuff," says Selldorf, who likes to think of herself as precise and neat but not obsessive. Indeed, the mix of pieces, amassed over a lifetime, points to a comfortable fluency between styles that range from Ming dynasty to Modernist. In the

kitchen, a glass-topped dining table with a sinuous wooden base designed by her father, the architect Herbert Selldorf, is flanked by sinewy metal chairs that are a reproduction of a design by her mother, the interior designer Dorrit Selldorf, as well as a sofa of Selldorf's own design. She originally conceived the cast metal light fixtures for the Neue Galerie in 1999, and they're now part of Vica, the Selldorf Architects' interiors collection. A Chinese armoire and an oversize Venini standing lamp ("hijacked" from her parents) make the room feel more like the living room it once was than a space for the preparation and consumption of food.

The actual living room, with its wall of windows, is another mix of Selldorf (father, mother and daughter alike) and Ming. It is anchored at one end by a handsome desk that Selldorf designed, cluttered with nothing more than a laptop. "I love sitting behind the desk and having this big room in front of me — and, of course, having Le Corbusier looking over me," she says, pointing to a black and white photograph of the master hanging above.

While Selldorf may often take her work home, she insisted on not bringing her home to the office and hired Lauren Wegel, a former employee, to do the drawings for her.

"I'm an excellent client," she insists, describing herself as focused and decisive but willing to change course when and if the case arises. "The truth is I've done so many residential spaces, it's a little bit humbling." (Many of these spaces can be seen in a monograph about her work, to be published by the Monacelli Press this fall.) "Do I really want to spend time thinking about my client's closet?" she asks, her answer implicit in her tone. "Is that interesting? It isn't, but it's part of the job."

More humbling, perhaps, is the experience of writing the checks. "Doing something someone else is paying for is about half as painful," she says, laughing. But what at a glance appears to be the apartment's most extravagant gesture — the white-and-gray striped marble floors that run almost entirely throughout — was in fact an economical decision. When she priced it out, the stone tile came in slightly cheaper than the wood she had intended to use. "I love that it feels very calm," Selldorf says of the cumulative effect. "People think that warm equals wood, but I think that it has to do with the balance. For me there is nothing nicer than walking barefoot in the apartment and to have the sensual experience of the space." ■





HAUTE CUISINE WHAT WAS FORMERLY THE NEIGHBORING APARTMENT'S LIVING ROOM IS NOW SELLDORF'S DINING ROOM, BELOW, AND KITCHEN, OPPOSITE. SELLDORF DESIGNED THE SOFA; THE TABLE WAS DESIGNED BY HER FATHER, THE ARCHITECT HERBERT SELLDORF, AND THE CHAIRS ARE A REPRODUCTION OF A DESIGN BY HER MOTHER, DORRIT. THE DRAWINGS ARE ALL BY THE ARTIST RAYMOND PETTIBON.

