



Architect
Annabelle Selldorf.

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This thoughtful talent’s ability to give modernity a lyrical spin has won Selldorf Architects a worldwide following

ELLE DECOR: What are you trying to bring to architecture that isn’t there?

Annabelle Selldorf: Tension is an interesting quality—and architecture must have it. There should be elements of the inexplicable, the mysterious, and the poetic in something that is perfectly rational.

ED: What are your inspirations or influences?

AS: I’m inspired by looking at art, by looking at precedent. Looking is what you have to do if you want to make things, so you develop a critical eye.

ED: What are your three must-haves?

AS: A tape measure, my Lumix camera, and a very good pen; it’s all about recording, I guess.

ED: How do you describe your style?

AS: Modern. It’s specific, precise, restrained, and plausible.

ED: How has your aesthetic evolved?

AS: My aesthetic is the same. What has changed is the degree to which I like to mess with it. I am more experimental than I used to be. I’m no Buckminster Fuller, but I enjoy challenging myself.

ED: What materials are your hallmarks?

AS: There isn’t any one material that’s mine. It all depends on the context. For example, I did a house that had the most exquisite marble applications. That sounds ostentatious, but it wasn’t, given the context. The color white I subscribe to extensively. I love thinking about color, but I often go with white.

ED: What design advances do you find exciting?

AS: I’m not so interested in technology for technology’s sake. I don’t need incredibly sophisticated climate-control systems. And I’m absolutely amazed at the time people spend exchanging messages; I don’t have a lot of time left over for those things.

ED: What is the most important thing you have learned?

AS: Listening and collaborating—all the while pursuing my own path—and making use of other people’s points of view. The more you know what a client wants, the more interesting it gets.

ED: How has the public’s increased awareness of design affected your work?

AS: The more educated people are, the more sophisticated the dialogue is. The pitfall is that occasionally people think architecture is a paint-by-numbers activity—which it’s not.

ED: What’s the last place that made you think, I wish I’d done that?

AS: An overgrown garden wall on Long Island. It was at once architectural and natural; it had this wonderful quality of capturing life.

INTERVIEW BY VICKY LOWRY