

Going Modern in Old New York

By Candace Jackson
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Ten years ago, designer Jennifer Post fell in love with the Apthorp, one of Manhattan's classic grande-dame buildings, subleasing a sprawling 5,000-square-foot apartment from a former client for just \$1,754 a month.

Two moves in the building and a few million dollars later, Ms. Post finally has a permanent home here. When she first moved in, she said, the apartment was filled with dark walnut and painted a deep green color—"It looked like Oregon in the woods." Now her apartment fits her modern, minimal style, which contrasts sharply with the Apthorp's exterior of limestone arches, plaster relief sculptures and wrought-iron railings.

Dark wood herringbone floors have been lacquered white throughout the 2,800-square-foot two-bedroom unit. In the living room, there's a clear lucite desk with a pale yellow midcentury chair behind it and a white rectangular Italian couch, with a light green blanket folded neatly over one arm. Ms. Post's signature white paint—a secret mixture of several subtle shades—now covers wall panels along with pale yellow accents. "My home is edited and balanced," said the 46-year-old designer. "I think you have a lot more freedom and time without all the clutter."

To mix things up, Ms. Post said she'll often rotate her art collection, which also includes a few tall skinny rabbit bronze sculptures by the artist Barry Flanagan, a red Ellsworth Kelly lithograph and a black-and-white framed photo of Pablo Picasso. A few cheeky touches include a tank for her two pet goldfish (Atlantic and Pacific) in the dining room, and a black marble sculpture of a bench shaped like a hippopotamus in a hallway.

Known for her very clean, contemporary style and muted color palates, Ms. Post has designed Park Avenue apartments and Beverly Hills estates—usually stripping them down to the studs, rebuilding them and filling them with coordinating artwork. Clients have included Simon Cowell and Jennifer Lopez, and she's worked on the Miami home of John Hannan, chairman of Apollo Investment Corp.

Kelly Kennedy Mack, the president of Corcoran Sunshine Marketing Group, hired Ms. Post to redo her home. Ms. Post oversaw everything from architectural drawings to picking out tissue boxes for the powder room. The end result was a mostly white, open space with light gray

accents. "They're not designed to be cluttered," Ms. Mack said of the design. "Everything that doesn't have a place gets thrown out."

Ms. Post admitted that her minimalism turns off some potential clients. "I'm not for everyone," she said. (Aside from white with pale accents, her other professional color palette, she said, includes darker browns). The discipline translates to other aspects of her life: Linens are completely replaced once a month to add different accent colors (the old ones, she said, are donated to one of her building's doormen or to charity). Her refrigerator is filled mainly with bottled water and organic energy drinks. Hanging in her closet are just a few sweaters, pants and T-shirts neatly folded or hanging in her bedroom closet—all either black or white. "It's just the way I am naturally," she said, dressed in a fitted black turtleneck and creased black cigarette pants.

Born and raised in Cincinnati, Ms. Post studied at the University of London and has been working as an architectural designer for more than 20 years. In New York, her work can be seen in the Time Warner building at Columbus Circle and in 15 Central Park West. She's recently been commissioned to design homes in the Middle East.

After a couple of years in her first Apthorp apartment Ms. Post moved for a few years to a one-bedroom rental in the building before landing her current sun-filled apartment four years ago. Then in 2007, new owners paid \$426 million for the complex, one of the highest prices ever paid for a rental building. Plans to convert it into condominiums stumbled, with the building nearly falling into foreclosure at one point. Forty-eight percent of the apartments are still rented.

Last November, Ms. Post bought her unit for \$2.8 million, a 40% discount from the asking price, partly because of a discount she was able to negotiate because she was already living in it. Residents have included Nora Ephron and Cyndi Lauper. There's a similarly sized apartment on the market asking \$5.25 million.

Now Ms. Post plans to remodel the kitchen and bathrooms. She recently purchased two bright pink upholstered chairs. But after a month, she sent them away to be re-covered in yellow cashmere. "I like an equilibrium of color," she said. "It made me a little nervous."

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