

DESIGN IN BLACK & WHITE



Janelle McCulloch

images
Publishing



MANHATTAN PIED-À-TERRE

NEW YORK CITY, USA

New Yorkers are not backward when it comes to being forward, especially when it relates to architecture and interior design. Some of America's most innovative projects are being developed in the city that never sleeps, and this striking pied-à-terre by visionary designer Charles Allem (of leading firm CAD International), which he designed for himself to retreat to whenever he was in town on business, is testament to New York City's extraordinary creativity.

Swathed in layers of black-and-white stripes, the interior is so graphic it could be inspired by the city's famous cartoons or old film noir classics. In fact, the residence was designed to echoes the lines of the highly defined city outside—framed beautifully in the apartment's windows—where horizontals and verticals rule the Manhattan skyline. Allem is a firm fan of monochromatic graphics, especially when used in a minimalist fashion. "It creates harmony," he says, "and keeps everything connected, while making a room dynamic and explosive."

The 1700-square-foot residence on upper Fifth Avenue started out as a two-bedroom apartment. Most people would have been happy with the floor plan, retaining the extra guest bedroom for, well, guests and family. Not Allem. He argues there are beautiful hotels in his part of New York, in which guests will no doubt feel far more comfortable, and so he did something that would shock most New Yorkers: he removed the second bedroom. The result is a luxurious space—and a spacious master suite—that suits this sybaritic designer down to the ground. In fact, he's so enamored with luxury in the home, he even designed his bedroom to resemble a five-star hotel suite, complete with a sitting corner with desk and an inviting TV lounge area.

What really sets this residence apart, however, is the stripes—big, bold, hand-painted horizontal stripes—running right through the apartment, including the office area. For some, these might seem too bold, too, well, stripy, but Allem has cleverly toned them down with the use of equally dramatic vintage furniture, including four glamorous white-leather ottomans (used as dining chairs), graphic black-and-white slipper chairs, a black writing desk, and a kidney-shaped sofa—which are all, interestingly, from the 1950s and 60s. The two—apartment and its pieces—offset each other and seem to "calm" each other down by virtue of being the same dramatic shades. It's an interesting approach to interior design and it certainly works. The place is magnificent.

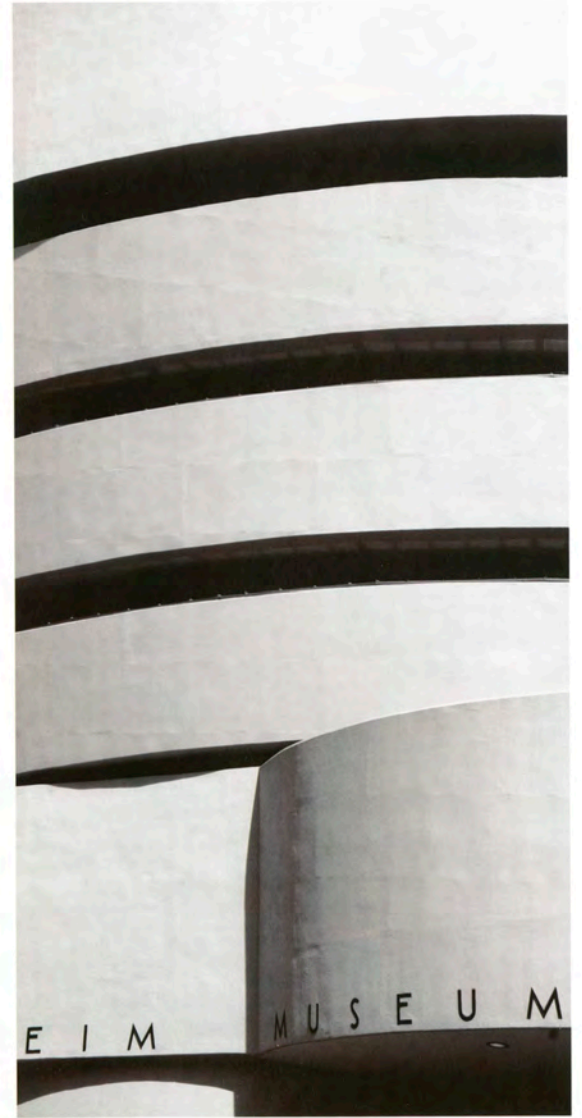
Allem believes it works because the dominant theme is black and white. The black, he says, which even extends to the floor, unifies the space, while the white brings light and presence to the interior. But he also argues that the space is well edited. There is little clutter, and each piece of furniture serves more than one purpose. As a space—and certainly as a pied-à-terre—it's marvelously multi-functional: a harmonious ode to living well in the city that knows how to do just that.

Photography by Tim Lee









Photography by Tim Lee and Janelle McCulloch





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