

This page: Architect Paul Gleicher hung a crystal-and-chrome Venini chandelier above his clients' dining table and designed a console of wood, granite, and bronze. The chairs are upholstered in Donghia's Au Marché jacquard. Facing page: In the foyer, natural woods and neutral walls set off the clients' art collection. A floating walnut light trough runs alongside Danish designer Paul Henningsen's artichoke light. The benches, made from ebonized Douglas fir, are from Comerford Hennessy at Home. The 19th-century prayer rug is a family heirloom.



# DIVIDE



In a classic Manhattan apartment, architect Paul Gleicher does





# AND CONQUER

Writer: Christine Pittel

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some space exploration with floating planes and sliding panels









A pair of Jean Royère chairs, dating from 1939 and reupholstered in Donghia's Palazzo taffeta, anchor one end of the living room. The watery grain of a 1950s Danish coffee table is echoed in Gleicher's walnut window reveals—a minimalist nod to traditional paneling. The fabric on the throw pillow is Juniper damask from Donghia.

Usually when an architect walks in and announces, "All this has to go, let's start over," the homeowners blanch and it's the architect who's got to go. But when New York-based architect Paul Gleicher said exactly that to clients on Manhattan's Upper West Side, they agreed with him. The prewar apartment they had just bought was a stately dowager in need of a face-lift. "The heavy moldings and heavier wainscoting just didn't suit this young family," Gleicher recalls. "There was a glorious view of Central Park, but the boxy rooms stopped the light from penetrating into the interior."

The architect banked on the secret of even the most staid New York apartment buildings: if you remove a few walls, lofts emerge. "The demolition phase of a job is one of my favorite moments," says Gleicher. "Once you get rid of all the detritus, you can really see what you have to work with. You also find out exactly where the plumb-







Sliding walnut panels on a steel track separate the living room (facing page) from the study (this page). The central panel on the bookcase slides apart to reveal a television screen. Le Corbusier's cowhide-covered chaise is partnered with a chair by Swedish designer Carl Malmsten. The Diplomat coffee table, designed by Josef Frank in 1949, is still in production at Svenskt Tenn.



ing risers and all those other hidden surprises are located.”

After Gleicher stripped the apartment down to its columns and windows, he had 3,000 free-and-clear square feet to tailor to the family’s needs. Rather than keeping the living room, dining room, and study separate, he connected all three as one flexible space. Each room now closes or opens onto the others, depending

on how the owners deploy a series of sliding panels suspended on tracks hung from steel beams. With the panels pushed back, the rooms become one big expanse, ideal for entertaining; they can also be pulled out in different configurations to create more intimacy. An homage to traditional Japanese shoji screens, the panels are made of wood instead of paper to honor the clients’ Swedish heritage.



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Facing page: A sliding panel in the kitchen hides an adjacent laundry and wine storage room. The stainless-steel counter was customized with an integral sink. The Bulthaup cabinetry is faced with stainless steel and strips of cherry with walnut inlay. Below: Stools by Philippe Starck are pulled up to a honed black granite breakfast bar.



Both husband and wife grew up with the bold forms and beautiful woods of Scandinavian modernism. In Sweden, where a forest looms in practically every backyard, wood makes abstract design warm to the touch.

The post-demolition maze of irregular beams and pipes lent itself to an architecture of shifting forms rather than static volumes. Gleicher, using a Mondrianesque approach, layered the

apartment into a complex sequence of point, line, and plane. In the entrance hall, a high floating slab of beautifully grained walnut may look like a sculpture, but it also incorporates lights and masks air-conditioning ducts. The cherry floor, with walnut borders, is the composition's biggest plane, unifying all the spaces. The woods on the floors and walls meld with the owners' collection of Swedish Modern furniture;



Facing page: The walnut panels on the powder room ceiling and the Bisazza tiles on the wall reflect the glow of two light fixtures set into the mirror. A Dornbracht faucet follows the curves of a basin designed for Duravit by Philippe Starck. Below: Gleicher designed the pearwood bed and matching cabinets in the master bedroom. Donghia's Spectrum, a jaunty silk taffeta stripe, hangs at the windows. The ceiling fixture is a Swedish antique. Bottom: The team of Paul Gleicher, architect (seated), and interior designer David Barry. For more details, see Resources.



Gleicher's associate, interior designer David Barry, extended the wood tones into the fabrics and rugs, orchestrating a limited but elegant range from taupe to beige. Among this ensemble an occasional soloist stands out, like the unusual cabinet with asymmetrical drawers by Josef Frank, a Viennese architect who worked in Sweden.

Gleicher added another dimension of materiality, and a little edge, to his

panels with exposed steel tracks. In the kitchen he elaborated on the juxtaposition of wood and metal with a collage of cherry, walnut, black granite, and brushed stainless steel. "So many people have a misconception of modernism," says Gleicher. "They think of it as cold and distant and shy away from it. But in fact, it's a tremendously rich language that can be warm, inviting, even liberating." ●









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