

All and Nothing

Located in a former art deco residential hotel that also housed a school, a museum, and an auditorium, this loft is a refuge from the sounds of Manhattan and the fury of work for a confirmed minimalist. Architect Belmont Freeman made the most of the combined space of what were once two separate units to build a sanctuary in New York City's Upper West Side.

When Freeman began the project, he was living in a tiny and strangely designed unit on the top floor of the same building. Given the chance to buy the unit next door, he decided to unify the space to fit the rhythm of his life. He reduced his considerable collection of books and art to a few key pieces. The serenity of the space derives in part from the profound cleansing of his material possessions, as well as from a smart floor plan. The new apartment has 260 square feet facing the Hudson River to the west and the Jersey Shore to the east. Two giant terraces extend the view, bringing color to the apartment at sun set and light throughout the day.

The renovated space required building a kitchen where there was none before. Designed by Freeman, the kitchen is separated from the social space

by a partial height wall. The main bedroom is isolated from the common rooms by curves in the walls that make doors unnecessary and lend the whole space fluidity.

The minimalism of the design is accentuated by a restricted color palette and spare materials throughout the space. The walls and ceilings are white. The cabinets and shelving are made of laminated plastic. The counter tops in the kitchen and bath are made of rust-proof steel. The floors are a blue-gray terrazzo, the most expensive element in the renovation and the only powerful note in the whole space.

The transformation was entirely designed by Freeman and included some pieces of furniture that fulfill several functions at once. The vibe in the loft is serene and clear, as Freeman explains what motivated him as though he were echoing modern life. "The real luxury," says Freeman, "has nothing to do with possessions." In fact, Freeman says, the real luxury for him is not inside the apartment, but outside, in the spectacular views of Manhattan.



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