

Designer Vicente Wolf applied his serene signature style to a family's New York City apartment. Custom-made sofas covered in a VW Home mohair and carpets by Warp & Weft anchor informal seating groups in the living area, whose windows are dressed with Roman shades of a Janus et Cie fabric. The ottoman is upholstered in a Holly Hunt suede, the two photographs in the corner are by Todd Hido, and the walls are painted in Benjamin Moore's Super White. For details see Sources.

No Boundaries

To transform a family's Manhattan aerie, interior decorator Vicente Wolf looks to the magnificent sky and water vistas outside as well as an array of cultures abroad

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VICENTE WOLF HAS LONG BELIEVED IN THE LUXURY OF MINIMALISM.

In the 1970s the New York City interior decorator helped pioneer the style now known as High-tech, popularizing a design aesthetic that established less as more. To him there was a Zen quality to the use of humble, often repurposed industrial furnishings at home. As he once observed, "It has taken a long time for Americans to become aware that simplicity can be elaborate."

Today Wolf is an undisputed minimalist master. The latest iteration of his spare, deceptively sumptuous approach is epitomized by one recently completed project: a 3,200-square-foot downtown Manhattan apartment overlooking the Hudson River, for which the clients, an entertainment-industry executive and his wife, gave him carte blanche. "I don't think we've ever put ourselves as completely in the hands of a decorator as we did with Vicente," says the husband. "One hundred percent of the furniture is new."

After raising two children in a Park Avenue residence amid antiques, Oriental rugs, and a formal dining room



Chinese horseshoe-back chairs punctuate each vignette; the flat-screen television is by Samsung. **Opposite:** A Thai driftwood wheel, a grinding stone from India, and a Foscarini frosted-glass table lamp are displayed on a 19th-century Chinese cabinet in the living room; the mirrored wall at left was designed by Wolf to reflect the river view.



the sky and river. "All the colors blend together to lend a relaxed quality," Wolf says. "It is inviting rather than hard-edged." To further humanize the cool, cerebral rooms, he employed the tried-and-true method of adding antiques and artifacts discovered during his frequent travels abroad. "All of the accessories have a patina," he says, pointing to the Thai driftwood wheel and Indian grinding stone that are showcased like sculpture on the living area's 19th-century Chinese cabinet. "Instead of sharp elements we chose objects that have a worn look."

A yin-and-yang strategy is evident in the dining area, where a table of Wolf's design comprises a smooth walnut top with a drum-shaped base of polished stainless steel. He surrounded the piece with two different styles of armchair—one rounded and low-backed, the other more angled and upright.

"The owners did not want a separate, formal room," he explains of the space, which flows not only into the living room but also the library (originally a fifth bedroom). A partial divider now displays the clients' vibrant David Hockney print in the dining area and, on the flip side, a flat-screen television. The library's bookcases have mirrored backs that reflect the sky, giving the illusion of open space beyond. "You feel like there are no boundaries," the decorator says.

The master suite is cozier than the rest of the apartment, but no less sleek. Wolf installed floor-to-ceiling limed-oak panels along one wall and set the upholstered bed against them. For the windows, which also boast river views, he chose tailored curtains in a blue-gray wool. The tone-on-tone interplay of hues produces a visceral connection with the outdoors. "I didn't want it to feel like a hotel," he notes, citing the decision to include antique furnishings such as an Art Nouveau chair and an Indian side table inlaid with bone. "These pieces keep the room from being one-dimensional."

Decades of experience have taught Wolf that clients cannot always visualize a completed space, so he banned the couple from visiting the apartment for the two weeks prior to the big reveal. "When we walked in, it felt like a life-changing event," recalls the husband. "Sometimes minimalism can be so spare that you think, 'Where's the remote?' but this is a very practical apartment. It is clean but doesn't feel sterile." Indeed, comfort without clutter has always been Wolf's specialty. "I think most people need less stuff," the designer says. "It's great if you have it and love it, but it is not a necessity to live beautifully." □

Left, from top: A work on paper by Helen Frankenthaler in the travertine-clad master bath. The daughter's room features a Room & Board four-poster and Restoration Hardware bed linens; the window treatment is of a VW Home wool.



From top: Limed-oak paneling enriches the master suite, whose curtains are of the same VW Home wool used to upholster the bench; the comforter is made of a J. Robert Scott silk, the Hinson & Co. swing-arm lamps are from Donghia, and the carpet is by Stark. Artemide wall lamps flank a print by Sam Francis in the son's room; the headboard is sheathed in a VW Home wool, the bed linens are by Restoration Hardware, and the side table at right is by Room & Board.