

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

WEB-EXCLUSIVE HOME TOUR

A Minimalist 1930s Apartment with Iconic Views of New York City

Architect David Davis and his hotelier husband give an old apartment a new, refreshingly modern life

TEXT BY [SHELLECKEIT](#) | PHOTOGRAPHY BY [JULIA CHURCHILL](#) | Posted October 29, 2016



When architect David Davis, managing principal of New York's [Boris Studio](#), visited the estate sale of a two-bedroom apartment in a 1930s building in midtown Manhattan, he knew he'd found his next design project. Davis and his husband, Brad Wilson, president of the Ace Hotel Group, had recently moved out of a one-bedroom in Chelsea and were looking to update to accommodate frequently visiting wives and nephews. To the untrained eye, the apartment had little appeal. The floor plan was dark and cluttered, and the charm of its Art Deco beginnings was lost as necessary updates and restorations were slacked over by the home's previous, longtime owner. Davis certainly saw these flaws, but he also saw multiple terraces—albeit crisscrossing—expansive windows, a particularly spectacular view of the Empire State Building, and the previous owner's potential to be the key, well-appreciated owner into which it's been transformed.

"We literally took all the walls down in the apartment," says Davis, who along with Wilson, wanted to keep the plan wide open to let natural light flood through. A gut renovation also gave the couple the opportunity to design a sunny kitchen with a large, open work surface for regular entertaining. "Brad cooks quite often," Davis says. "The idea was to open up the kitchen and create a long counter-top that engages the whole space." Another of the architect's challenges was to integrate adequate storage into the home's limiting 1930s framework. His solution was to line the walls of the kitchen and part of the living area with cabinetry, concealing everything from pantry items to the pair's television behind discreet white-lacquered doors.

One might expect the president of Ace Hotels to live in a ramble, more decorated interior, but that is not the case in Wilson and Davis's bright, [minimalistic](#) home. "I made a conscious decision that our apartment would be an extreme contrast to the building itself," says Davis, who describes their apartmental New York City lobby as dark and traditional. He settled on a neutral color palette with crisp white walls and light stone surfaces, to best absorb and reflect the sunlight from the city outside. The home's numerous custom furniture pieces and impressive art selection evoke the elevated sensibilities of its decidedly design-aware inhabitants. And while there are occasional hints at the apartment's past life—such as the original steel windows—the real result carries undeniable present-day appeal.



"It certainly sticks out," says Davis. "The '30s apartment has done with behind that." Wilson, president of the Boris Studio, demonstrates how the pairing of dark window frames with more contemporary pieces is perhaps best seen in the dining area. Here, Kall's [Eames](#) side chair goes up to the family kitchen dining table while a custom lamp by [Franklin Doolittle](#) illuminates the counter-top and walls the apartment's original floor. [Black](#) walls around the Empire State Building complete the scene.



David calls his [2014 Julia Kent](#) a [candleholder](#) from [Julia Kent](#) in the living room. "Hardly a minimal aesthetic, the straight-edged by [Lindsey Adelman](#). Center table is a [Kall's](#) [Eames](#) side chair and [Franklin Doolittle](#) lamp by [Franklin Doolittle](#) illuminate the counter-top and walls the apartment's original floor.



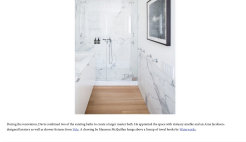
In the kitchen, Davis cleverly incorporated custom white-lacquered cabinets to accommodate storage solutions. The straight-edged open-shelving vanity table conceals the TV, and [Kall's](#) [Eames](#) side chair and [Franklin Doolittle](#) lamp by [Franklin Doolittle](#) illuminate the counter-top and walls the apartment's original floor.



The living area is the centerpiece of the home, with the couple's [Boris Studio](#) chair, which is a 1930s [Eames](#) side chair from [Kall's](#) [Eames](#) side chair and [Franklin Doolittle](#) lamp by [Franklin Doolittle](#) illuminate the counter-top and walls the apartment's original floor.



During the renovation, Davis combined some of the existing bath to create a larger master bath. He opened the space with white marble walls and the [Boris Studio](#) [Eames](#) side chair and [Franklin Doolittle](#) lamp by [Franklin Doolittle](#) illuminate the counter-top and walls the apartment's original floor.



The well-appointed guestroom, which doubles as a home office, features photography by [Miguel Espinosa](#) and [Rob Adelman](#). The table from [Kall's](#) [Eames](#) side chair and [Franklin Doolittle](#) lamp by [Franklin Doolittle](#) illuminate the counter-top and walls the apartment's original floor.



"But we're still getting the complete picture when they visit the apartment," says Davis of their own view. "The Empire State Building, you'll get a different view of the Empire State Building from the terrace, which is not the case with the other views of the building."