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Space Masters

Inspired by his idol Billy Baldwin, a devotee of small spaces, Larry



George Smith sofa in the living room is flanked by distressed leather wing chair from Ralph Lauren Home and Billy Baldwin slipper chair by Billy Baldwin Studio through Hinson. Cocktail table is another Baldwin design; bamboo étagère was inspired by him. Wilton velvet carpet from Stark. Opposite: Mantel dense with personal treasures includes black-matted portrait of the owner by Joe Eula.



Gordon gives his trim and boxy apartment warmth and comfort

“I was concerned about scale, but much more about comfort”

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design vice-president at Ralph Lauren, Larry Gordon had certain concerns when he set about decorating his one-bedroom apartment in a fine old Emery Roth–designed building in New York’s Greenwich Village—and they didn’t have to do with size. “I wanted it to be appropriate,” Gordon says. “I didn’t worry so much that the rooms weren’t gigantic. I was concerned about scale, but much more about comfort. Most of all, I didn’t want to be afraid, when I went away for the weekend, that I would come home on Sunday night to find my apartment had gone out of style.”

There’s little likelihood of that happening as Gordon has composed a timeless interior made up almost entirely of classic pieces spanning several centuries: from an 18th-century–style wing chair to a 19th-century campaign chest to a mid-20th-century table by Isamu Noguchi. But the unifying thread tying all those disparate periods together is a modern sensibility that Gordon attributes to one of his design idols, Billy Baldwin.

The master is evoked the moment you enter the apartment’s glossy chocolate-brown foyer, the floor of which is covered in boldly striped jute in summer and a red-bordered leopard-print rug in winter. Yet despite such Baldwinesque touches throughout the handsomely detailed apartment—including matchstick bamboo blinds beneath the simply tailored, slightly puddled, butterscotch living room curtains—the designer’s influence has more to do with his hallmark principles of ease and suitability than with any specifically recognizable motifs.

“I treated the apartment like it was on Park Avenue,” says Gordon. “I gave it everything. If I was going to spend money, I wanted to devote it to furnishings that were really lasting, and true investments. On the other hand, many of my things were picked up at flea markets or given to me by friends—a mix of couture and thrift shop. Everything has a story, everything is a memento building layers and layers of sentiment.”

That sense of layering is particularly strong in the several places where Gordon has purposely placed certain pieces to block one another, such as a low chinoiserie table that makes several drawers of the campaign chest inaccessible. “It’s perverse,” acknowledges Gordon, “but I like it because it adds tension.” In more practical terms, it lets him introduce more objects to a small space than conventions of freestanding placement would usually allow.

The patina of age that the apartment has already taken on is not just a function of its time-tested components, however. “It faces east and gets blinding morning sunlight,” explains Gordon, “which I love. The colors are starting to fade, and I encourage that. Although I think the apartment is stylish, I hope it’s not fashionable. As Coco Chanel said, ‘Fashion passes, style remains.’”



Larry Gordon calls the foyer (above), painted in Benjamin Moore porch-and-floor enamel, “my little homage to Billy Baldwin.” Striped jute rug made to the owner’s design by Stark, flea-market console and mirror.



On wire-base
Noguchi table in
the living room,
vintage and
Jonathan Adler
ceramics beneath
a reproduction
Degas dancer from
the Metropolitan
Museum of Art.
Gordon found the
1940s floor lamp
on the street.
All-black painting
by Lisa Dawn
Gold. Silk burlap
curtains from
Interiors by
Royale, New York.