

DECEMBER 2002

DESIGN TO INSPIRE

HOUSE & GARDEN



designer savvy

Jay McInerney, left, and Campion Platt, who brought order and style to the writer's life.

trade secrets

CARPETS The semaphore rug, this page, is from the Campion Campaign collection, NYC. A cow skin is on the floor behind the bookshelf.

FURNITURE Elements from the Campion Campaign collection include the Inside Out folding bench, this page; alabaster vases, urns, and bowls, opposite page; and the Sleeping Hero daybed. The ebony bookshelf was custom-made by Jordache Woodworking Corp.

a fresh start

A NOVELIST RESETTLES IN A ONE-BEDROOM APARTMENT
WITH FURNITURE DESIGNED BY ARCHITECT CAMPION PLATT



"I WANT TO LIVE LIKE THIS," I TOLD CAMPION. "YOU

NEW YORK is, among other things, the capital of the fresh start. I've made several here, one of the many reasons I remain infatuated with the city long after other romances have foundered and faded.

A little over a year ago I found myself living alone in a haunted eight-room duplex on the Upper East Side. Well, almost alone—my friend Campion Platt had taken up residence in the downstairs guest bedroom. But since he had his own entrance and tended to wake up about the time that I was going to sleep, we didn't see each other much. Even if I could have afforded to stay, the apartment was haunted by the ghosts of my recently departed family. And I'd never really felt at home on the Upper East Side.

After a brief layover in a Chelsea apartment, from which I watched the Twin Towers fall, I found what I was looking for in Greenwich Village: a well-proportioned one bedroom with wraparound windows in a 1932 Art Deco building on Fifth Avenue. Much of my first novel, *Bright Lights, Big City*, was written a block away, in Washington Mews, and much of it is set in the immediate neighborhood. Mark Twain, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Dawn Powell, Djuna Barnes, and Eugene O'Neill had all lived within a few blocks. Plenty of history, personal and literary. But, still, I wanted a fresh start.

Over the course of many lives and several marriages, I had acquired a mishmash of furnishings, from antique to postmodern, mismatched and all too redolent of my fragmented history. I wanted to chuck it all and start from scratch. And I felt nostalgic for two years spent in Kyoto after college, in a four-room house with three pieces of furniture. I wanted a clean, aesthetically coherent environment. >

designer savvy

The style of the living room manages to be both warm and thought-provoking.

trade secrets

FABRICS Bergamini's Avila linen in beige, by Rubelli, is on the daybed, pillows, armchair, and Napoleon & Josephine club chairs. The suede pillows are from Cortina Leathers; the orange pillows are Lena moiré in Melon from Schumacher.



AN'T AFFORD IT," HE SAID. "BUT LUCKILY YOU KNOW THE DESIGNER"





designer savvy The dining gallery, above, the entry gallery, below, the living room, right, and the bedroom, opposite page, contain elements that serve more than one purpose.

trade secrets **WALL COVERINGS** The bedroom has Venetian plaster walls that mimic parchment, and the entry and dining galleries are painted, with a pearlized finish. **FABRICS** In the bedroom, the Take Five bench is covered with Cortina suede, and the headboard is done in Edelman leather. The cashmere coverlet, cashmere blanket, and camel cashmere body pillow are from Calvin Klein. Sources, see back of book.

WHO IS CAMPION PLATT?

■ **BIOGRAPHY** Since he is related to the society-savvy Charles Platt, an early-20th-century architect and landscape designer, Campion Platt's calling is no surprise. After receiving a masters degree in architecture from Columbia University, he polished his skills at Arquitectonica, a Miami-based firm.

■ **ON THE TOWN** By 1986, Platt had struck out on his own. A maker of spaces *and* scenes, he helped develop Hollywood's Chateau Marmont and New York's Mercer Hotel.

■ **COMMISSIONS** Celebrity clients like Meg Ryan, Al Pacino, and Russell Simmons allow Platt to design architecture, interiors, and custom furniture. In a way, they have been his "guinea pigs" for the Campaign line.

■ **SHOW IT OFF** He plans to open Campion SoHo, a showroom for his furniture collection, in summer 2003.



The plan really took shape when I attended a preview party for a new line of furniture designed by my former roommate, architect Campion Platt. The collection, called Campaign, was inspired in part by classic Bauhaus design and in part by English campaign furniture—the stuff that English colonels lugged around to make their colonial postings more homey. Fashioned from gunmetal, ebony, leather, and my favorite fabric, linen, it was warmer and more comfortable somehow than Mies and Corbusier, but lean, imaginative, and thought-provoking. The mood was part pukka sahib, part enlightened '50s bachelor who collects Abstract Expressionists. I could see myself reading Conrad in the club chairs in between having romantic interludes on the daybed.





I was especially taken with the fact that most of the pieces were convertible, serving more than one purpose, a prime attraction in the context of a one-bedroom apartment—the ebony and gunmetal sideboard, for instance, which opened out to become a dining table for ten. While most of the women at the preview party tried to position themselves to get a better view of Campion, who looks like the love child of Clark Gable and Bryan Ferry, I gazed rapturously at the black leather and ebony Note to Self desk, which seemed designed with a peripatetic novelist in mind, and which folds up to the size of a gun case. “I want to live like this,” I told Campion when I finally got him alone for a moment. “This is me.” “You can’t afford it,” he said. “But, luckily for you, you know the designer.”

I’d met him just after another divorce, when I hired his ex-wife, architect and designer Alison Spear, to decorate a loft for me. Since then I’d watched Campion’s work and aesthetic develop. He had helped me with other apartments in the past, most recently doing the plans and contracting to convert two apartments in the Carlyle into a duplex after I’d had kids. He knows my taste and my habits. We share an enthusiasm for bespoke English tailoring—it seemed time for me to get a bespoke apartment.

There were two exceptions to the fresh start idea—art and books. Even after selling off some 3,000 volumes as part of my fresh start, I needed several hundred feet of shelves for my core library. Generally speaking, designers of (Cont. on page 161)

a fresh start

(*Cont. from page 133*) Champion's caliber, I gather, are commissioned by their busy, wealthy clients to purchase leather-bound books by the foot according to size and color. But Champion, to his credit, didn't seem to object to working around my preexisting collection of not entirely decorative books, designing a combination of sleek, portable, ebony and gunmetal shelves and built-ins made of inexpensive but elegantly finished fiberboard.

One bookshelf serves as a dramatic backdrop to the bed, with its chocolate leather headboard; another divides the study from the living area, imparting a sense of separation to the former dining area, which I converted into my study without entirely closing it off from the living room or the expansive entryway. The entryway remains open, except when I have dinner parties, at which point I unstack the cowhide-covered side chairs and slide the sideboard into the center of the space, opening the two leaves to create a plausible dining room.

My modest art collection has no organizing principle, except for a collection of vintage photographs of my favorite authors—Joyce, Dylan Thomas, Faulkner, and Fitzgerald. Painters Caio Fonseca and Jeff Carpenter, and photographers Jack Spencer and Patrick McMullan, are friends. My treasures also include a Cartier-Bresson, anonymous Japanese ukiyo-e woodblock prints, and pieces by Tennessee artists Maisie and Barrett McInerney, my 7-year-old twins.

Another friend, Brazilian artist Ricardo Brizolla, took on the job of painting the interior. I wanted Venetian plaster in the bedroom—something he has done for me in two previous apartments. This time he and Champion came up with a plaster technique that creates the illusion of a palimpsest of parchment sheets. The curtains and bedding, designed by Platt and made by Barbara Fiore, indulged my enthusiasm for linen, that most natural, impractical fabric.

I find myself so comfortable and so enraptured with my new, bespoke environment that I'm going out far less often than I used to. This may eventually have a deleterious effect on the downtown economy. Already, one Village restaurateur, worried about his children's tuition payments, has called to ask if I'm sick and offered to send a car. □