

The chilly beauty of Sweden takes  
a warm turn in a Chelsea loft

# Scandinavian cool



INTERIOR DESIGN BY STEPHAN JAKLITSCH

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CAN A LOFT IN CHELSEA have the austere appeal of clean-lined Swedish design? Judging from the recent transformation of a 3,000-square-foot space by designer Stephan Jaklitsch, the happy answer is *ja*.

The homeowner, a 38-year-old art director for top magazines, wanted his new home to reflect his Swedish roots in a wholly original and modern way, but he didn't know exactly how. Fresh from a smaller traditional prewar on Fifth Avenue, he chose the raw space for "a complete change," he says. He followed the suggestion of a friend, noted photographer Wayne Maser, and contacted Jaklitsch, whose eponymous firm is perhaps best known for designing Marc Jacobs stores around the world. It was a wise move.

"I didn't know if he was just being agreeable or what," says Jaklitsch. "We were so in sync that it was almost scary." It's a sentiment the owner shares. "Stephan made the process easy," he notes. "I was expecting a horrible experience, but he was so precise, spelling everything out. It was quite painless."

Their joint goal was to create a sense of luxury while capitalizing on the loft's industrial aesthetic. To that end, they agreed on a spare approach that reflected a Scandinavian sensibility. Jaklitsch divided the 15-month project into two phases: the first dealing primarily with the infrastructure and

**Swedish textiles fashioned into pillows, as well as a reindeer-hide throw, hint at the homeowner's roots. An aluminum rail displays a rotating art collection.**



walls, the second with the millwork and construction of the library. Jaklitsch began by organizing the space into a large living room, library, master bedroom with dressing area, guest bedroom and two baths. To hide the air conditioning and plumbing, the designer dropped the ceiling in certain places and raised the floor in others. The pipes of the ceiling's sprinkler system, however, were left exposed. This "gives dimension," Jaklitsch notes, and suggests the work of artist Piet Mondrian if he had painted in neutrals.

The library serves as a private place to work and watch television, but it also forms a hall leading from the front door so one doesn't instantly enter the living room. Demonstrating the designer and owner's shared emphasis on "little details," the library's unique steel-and-glass doors were a must.

"We'd have gone to any lengths to avoid tracks, which would have interrupted the smooth expanse of maple flooring," Jaklitsch says. "But I must admit, figuring out how to suspend them was a major engineering feat."

When it came to wall color, the owner had only one in mind: "White. I thought there was enough going on with the range of materials being used." But the designer had a different idea, one that he says was inspired by the northern light of Sweden: barely discernible tints of khaki, blue and green that would continually change depending on the lighting.

"Every time he wanted to talk about it, I'd avoid it," says the client, "and he'd just bring it up again later, planting the seeds in my mind." Finally, he says, he got it.

Walls in each room differ in degrees of shading. Using a





A Saarinen table surrounded by Eames chairs serves as a transition between the living room and the kitchen. A classic Louis Poulsen light fixture hangs over the seating space.









Space for the library, top left, was created with panels of ribbed glass and steel. A foosball table, bottom left, sits outside. The bedroom walls, above, are painted sheer blue but vary in appearance from white to dark gray-blue depending on the lighting.

generally dull lacquer with 20 percent sheen is an idea Jaklitsch picked up in Japan. While they are extremely light in tone—some visitors don't even notice at first glance—the variations that occur are many.

Furnishings from some of the most renowned figures of midcentury design, including

Ray and Charles Eames, Poul Kjaerholm and Eero Saarinen, complete the space.

"To an American eye, the apartment might seem austere," says Jaklitsch. "But from a Swedish perspective," the homeowner adds, finishing the thought, "I find it cozy—a super place to be in." ▣