

Robb Report LUXURY Home

CUSTOM DESIGN + ARCHITECTURE + HOME TECHNOLOGY

Power Structure

Four dynamic interiors express their owners' style



John Chadwick makes architectural music for a young film composer.

A Well-Orchestrated Pad



By Jorge S. Arango

Photography by Lydia Gould Beecher

GORTON DESIGNED ARCHITECTURE is "house music," which is a particularly appropriate way of thinking about a loft that John Chadwick designed for a wealthy young film composer who lives in Manhattan. It functions as both a living and working space, where music is made and business gets done. The building (at 100 West 11th Street) is a 19th-century cast-iron structure that has been completely renovated, including the addition of a new kitchen and bathroom. The building is a prime example of the "loft" lifestyle, where the original industrial structure is preserved and repurposed for modern living.

A Media Mogul's Playroom
Art Deco Lighters on D

"We stayed away from the typical loft layout and used undulating surfaces to create interest."

John Chadwick, owner/designer



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GOETHE DESCRIBED ARCHITECTURE as “frozen music,” which is a particularly appropriate way of thinking about a loft that John Chadwick revamped for a successful young film composer who lives in Manhattan. It functions as both a living and working space, where music is made (and frozen into the soundtracks of movies for posterity) in a layout that is like a carefully orchestrated sonata—full of sensuous legato lines, a gracefully unfolding theme and reverberating deep tones.

Yet to anyone who knew the apartment in its former incarnation, lofty musical references are the last things that spring to mind. The loft is housed in a turn-of-the-century book repository in the Flatiron District of New York; the building was converted into residences sometime during the 1960s or 1970s. “It was badly done,” the interior designer says. Blue gingham wallpaper and laminated particleboard cabinets lined the kitchen walls. The layout of the space obscured the modest amount of light that entered the windows that front Fifth Avenue. And the facilities? “I had seen more appealing bathrooms in a roadside park,” Chadwick says.

The client, who had grown up around his parents’ collection of Asian antiques, had a Japanese-inspired aesthetic in mind, though he admits his working habits are not exactly in harmony with the usual fastidiousness of the Zen style. Still, he says, “I don’t like a



The artwork, left, revealed through the master suite's sliding doors, is a 16th-century Japanese print. The sink pedestal, opposite, doubles as sculpture and shelving in the guest bath.



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> John Chadwick, interior designer

lot of clutter. I'm messy, but I'm a minimalist.”

“He was very up front about saying he wasn't neat in the studio and that he wanted to be at liberty to be that way without it affecting the whole apartment,” says Chadwick. “He is also a cook by avocation, so he knew how he wanted his kitchen to function. After that, he just let us go.”

Chadwick worked with architect Dan Lansner to compose a space that would be more appealing and practical. There was no moving the massive support columns, so they became sculptural elements and were painted a rich Chinese red to call attention to them. To impart more fluidity to the plain-white-box loft configuration, the architect and designer conceived of a layout with undulating walls that would break up the linearity of the design and also lead the eye from one area to the next.

A sleek Italian Boffi kitchen was installed across from the front door, with a dramatically figured marble countertop echoing the swooping grand piano-like curve of the suspended ceiling. “I didn't want to see anything,” says the client of his extensive stock of kitchen equipment, so Chadwick made sure there was plenty of cabinetry for storage. Tucked behind richly stained wenge millwork adjacent to the kitchen is a minimalist half bath. The sink pedestal—three consecutively smaller aluminum boxes that resemble a Donald Judd sculpture—is topped by a dramatic sink aswirl with green and red glass.

Diagonally across from the kitchen, enclosed in another undulating wall of wenge, is the composer's studio, which is elevated about 2 feet off the floor like a DJ's sound booth hovering over a dance floor. Chadwick used opaque industrial glass panels set into a wenge frame of repeating squares around the base (and also under the kitchen counter and on the pocket doors leading to the bedroom). Not only does it give the studio a floating effect but the motif also resembles stylized shoji screens, adding more of the subtle Asian aesthetic the client wanted. Inside, the studio is a tour de force of state-of-the-art composing and mixing equipment.

Past the raised studio is the dining/living area and, to the right behind the pocket doors are a master bedroom, walk-in closet and another minimalist bathroom that is swathed in green Esmeralda stone and slate flooring. That is a lot of utility in 1,500 square feet, but it does not end there. In the master closet, Chadwick stacked Hafele clothes racks to the ceiling, the top tiers of which pull down to waist height for easier access. Chadwick created another closet within this closet where he concealed a washer and dryer, so clothes can move directly to the racks after being laundered. And under the elevated studio the designer stowed a queen-size trundle bed for overnight guests.

The client and designer worked together to create most of the furniture, which has the chunky presence of Balinese or Thai country pieces that have been stripped of all ornamentation. The pearly finish of the khaki-colored walls, the Chinese red columns and the recessed red ceiling in the master bedroom provide textural contrast to the simple furnishings. Industrial halogen track lighting is a nod to the building's history. Against this background, the client has hung a growing collection of artwork that includes an enormous Helen Frankenthaler abstract painting, 16th-century Japanese prints and contemporary photography.

The loft feels most seductive at night when its warm tones seem to glow, providing a soothing coda for a brilliantly orchestrated opus.



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Opalescent glass and wood risers lead to the music studio, left, which overlooks the custom-designed dining table, below. The kitchen, opposite, is designed to conceal equipment and clutter.

