

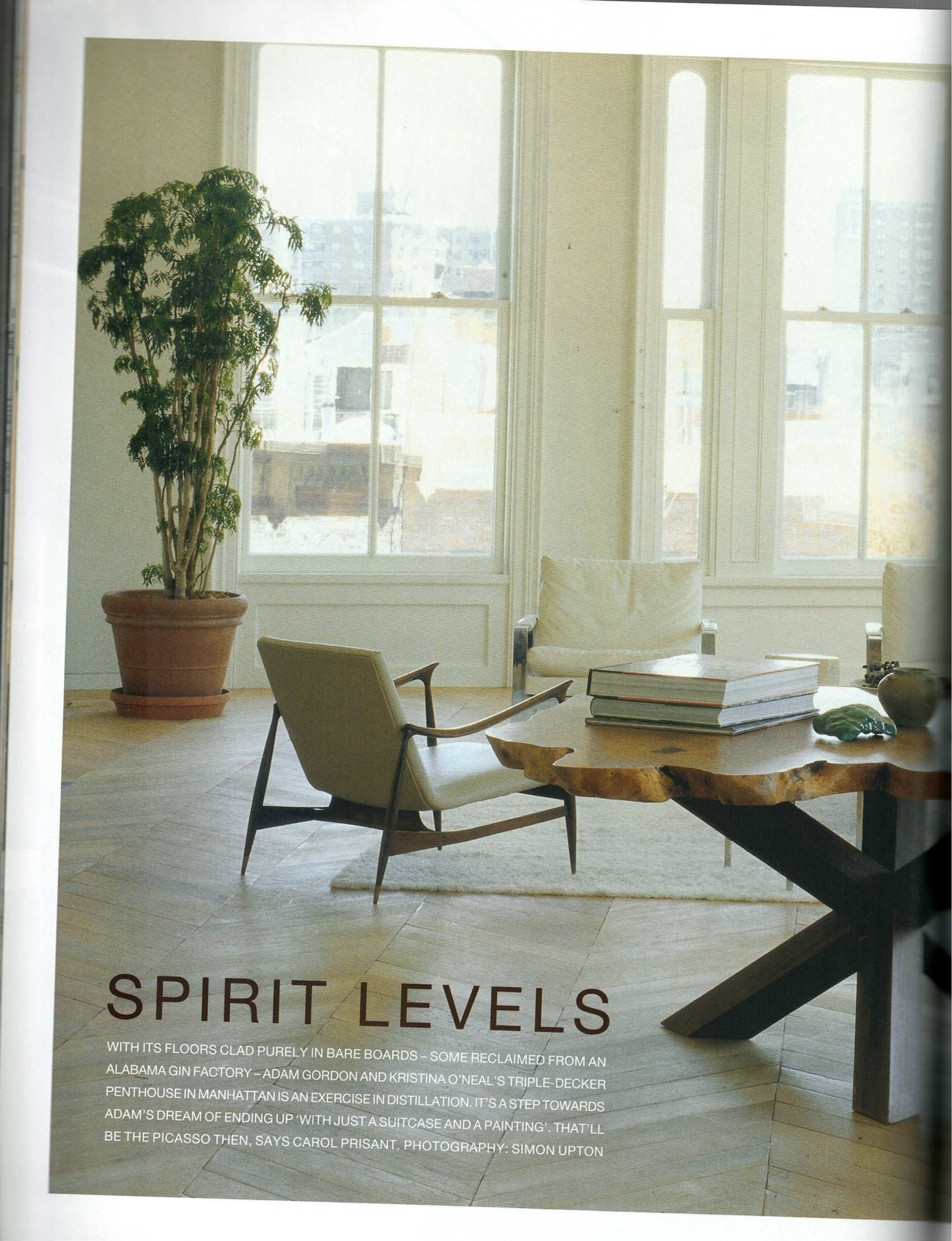
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THE WORLD OF INTERIORS

LA Getaway:
Mexican Spirit, Moroccan Spice

The Jeweller Who Dazzled Chanel

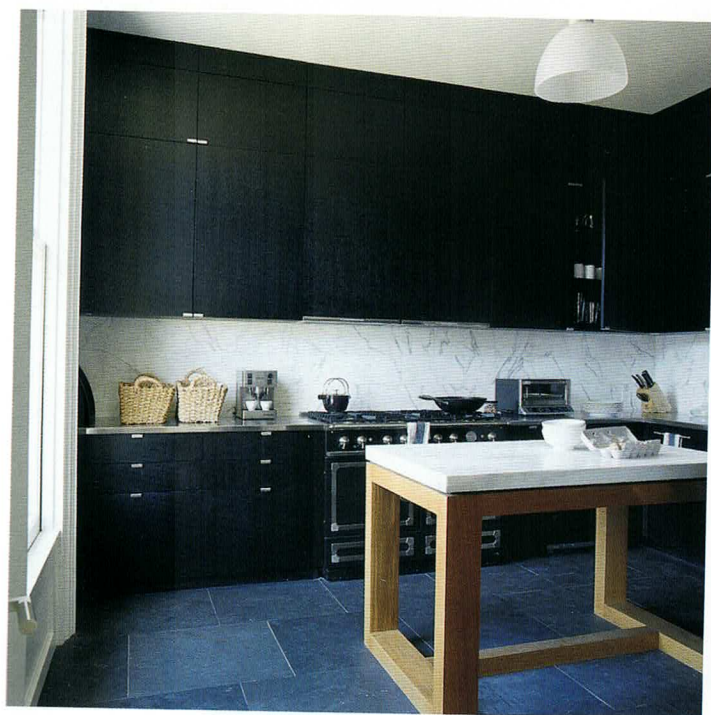


A photograph of a minimalist living room. On the left, a tall, leafy green plant in a terracotta pot stands next to a large window. In the center, a modern armchair with a light-colored seat and dark wooden frame is positioned. To the right, a low, wide wooden coffee table with a thick, natural-edge top and dark legs holds a stack of books and a small green object. Another window is visible in the background on the right. The floor is made of light-colored wooden planks.

SPIRIT LEVELS

WITH ITS FLOORS CLAD PURELY IN BARE BOARDS – SOME RECLAIMED FROM AN ALABAMA GIN FACTORY – ADAM GORDON AND KRISTINA O'NEAL'S TRIPLE-DECKER PENTHOUSE IN MANHATTAN IS AN EXERCISE IN DISTILLATION. IT'S A STEP TOWARDS ADAM'S DREAM OF ENDING UP 'WITH JUST A SUITCASE AND A PAINTING'. THAT'LL BE THE PICASSO THEN, SAYS CAROL PRISANT. PHOTOGRAPHY: SIMON UPTON





PREVIOUS PAGES: WOODEN BIOMORPHIC SHAPES IN THE LIVING AREA COMBINE EFFECTIVELY WITH BRAZILIAN DESIGN FROM THE 1950s. THE TRIPOD TABLE IS TOPPED WITH A HAN VASE AND DECORATIVE CHUNKS OF MALACHITE AND TURQUOISE BOUGHT ON EBAY. THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TWO FRAMED ASIAN SCROLLS HANG BETWEEN FLOOR-TO-CEILING WINDOWS; SEEN THROUGH THE KITCHEN DOOR IS THE WINE ROOM WITH ITS BAROQUE CENTRE TABLE AND, HANGING ABOVE, A PICASSO; BEYOND THE LIVING ROOM CAN BE GLIMPSED THE DINING ROOM, WITH ITS NAKASHIMA CHAIRS; EBONISED WOODEN CABINETS CONTRAST WITH WHITE MARBLE IN THE KITCHEN. OPPOSITE: ON A PEDESTAL BENEATH THE STAIRWAY TO THE SECOND FLOOR OF THE PENTHOUSE IS A 1959 SCULPTURE BY DOROTHY DEHNER





AT THE FAR END OF THE DRESSING AREA, A SMALL WARHOL SELF-PORTRAIT HANGS ABOVE A BUILT-IN CHEST OF DRAWERS. AN OPENING BETWEEN THE MIRRORED DOORS LEADS TO WHAT KRISTINA HAS DUBBED THE 'BOND BATHROOM'





IF CLINT EASTWOOD were a Manhattan penthouse, this is the one he'd be. It's so spare. So laconic. So hewn and stripped down to sinew. And as you contemplate its handsome bones, you could swear a breeze from Montana was ruffling your hair. Though it's human enough deep down. And pretty classy, too, in private: in the kitchens (yes, plural) and loos, especially. It's even Clint-ish up on the roof, where unweathered Astroturf embodies spaghetti-western kitsch. Many of us could get kinda lonely here, what with all the minimalism and the three airy floors. Existentially lonely.

Yet it's perfect for owners Adam Gordon and Kristina O'Neal. They're cool with bones. And anyhow, they've 'never stayed anywhere very long'. Actually, it's Adam's ultimate fantasy to 'show up at a hotel someplace with just a rolling suitcase and a painting': a unique and idiosyncratic dream that seems to be the direct result of his belief in reincarnation. 'It would prepare you,' he adds, 'for impermanence.' Though the rolling suitcase thing may have had something to do with the couple's having been married in a rowing boat. Keeps you moving right along, a rowing boat.

As to their digs, the Victorian exterior of 54 Bond (that's its name) seems to have been constructed by someone's aspirational immigrant uncle; some fellow, say, who arrived in the 1870s with a passion for the ornate, but ran short of cash at the corbels. Adam and Kristina, on the other hand, planned their great repurposing of its interiors to have 'a lot of negative space and room for breathing'. In other words, to be very, very empty and facilitate, perhaps, their leaving very quickly. To that end, instead of returning the rooms to even the modest grandeur they might once have enjoyed, they asked architect Steven Harris to reinterpret all the old mouldings and windows and to add some slick, contemporary detailing. Which is why it looks today like the high plains: bleached and scoured Belgian-oak floors; living spaces that open out and spill into other spaces with mote-filled beams of light; curtainless windows that let the burning sun beat down – or as much as the burning sun ever beats down in Greenwich Village.

Kristina, a partner in a commercial design business called Avro Ko, likes 'the idea of a small narrative'. At the Park Avenue Café, for example, Avro Ko's 'small narrative' focuses on Captain Cook's trip to the Galapagos and unfolds in four seasonal chapters. In 'Summer' there are white-resin turtle shells on yellow walls, in 'Autumn', the restaurant's ceiling is draped in nautical shrouds, and every three months, each chair cover, hanging fixture, menu, flower arrangement and even the staff's uniform undergoes its own metamorphosis. By contrast, in Kristina's penthouse, there's an entry hall with nothing but a primitive wooden workbench and a piece of tree.

There's the biomorphic furniture, of course, some Brazilian designs from the 1950s and a selection of natural odds and ends, malachite and turquoise, lying decoratively around on tung-oiled wooden surfaces, though not on the rosewood dining table. In the master bedroom, there are bare wide-plank pine floors that have been reclaimed from an Alabama gin factory (a small and possibly wobbly narrative in itself). But wholly unmissable is the raw cedar panelling in the wine room, where tasters spit freely on the floor. Just like Clint. In the centre of the wine room is a very large, very fancy, very self-important table that's highly anomalous here: sort of as if Clint has shown up in an Elvis suit. It makes one ask: 'Why so Baroque?' Turns out that Adam's been lugging the thing around for 20 years and finally made up his mind that it just wanted to live in a grandish room like this one – accompanied by his Picasso, a second small narrative.

It seems that Adam (who doesn't speak French) was nosing round an auction in France one day when a pile of Picassos caught his eye. When the first of them came up, he assumed the bidding was for the whole set; smelling a bargain, he bid... and bid and bid, and thrillingly, won. But *no* French is never good, for they handed him, well... one. Which hangs now in lonely splendour in the glassed-in purdah of the wine room, perhaps because magnums of pinot noir are required to enjoy it fully. Or at all.

His bathroom, surely, compensates. Kristina refers to it as the 'Bond bathroom', and you could certainly see Goldfinger cooling off here after a hard day of shock and ore. It has an elegant hallway lined with mirrored walk-in closet space and a handsome wooden vanity topped by Buccellati silver shells. These compete in luxe with a small black-and-white Warhol self-portrait and a private glassed-in WC (though does glassed-in really equal private?). The shower walls are clad in sienna silver travertine tiles with a shower basin that's an azul-limestone slab. I'm not sure what that is, exactly, but 007 must know; and he certainly knows about *her* bathroom – all slathered in sugar-white marble wall slabs and fitted with a 'luxurious Agape soaking tub'. So Bond girl. All these personal spaces, in fact, along with 'work' areas like the large main kitchen and the one on the roof, are scrubbed and clean and woody and rich.

There may yet come a day when I no longer have my socks knocked off by what's behind Manhattan's faceless doors but it's not here yet. It still thrills me that I can be wowed by a bare-bones sun-struck triple penthouse with James Bond baths. And oh, did I mention the virtual doorman? You press the button, put your mouth near its metal grid and say, in your finest whispery growl, 'Open up and make my day.' And it does ■
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