



# Katrin

Zimmermann and Michael John Downie were splitting their time between two rentals, a loft in Lower Manhattan and a country house two hours away, when they decided to buy a single home in town. “We looked endlessly for a house filled with artisanal Victorian detail that we could restore,” says Zimmermann, a designer of pared-down, geometric jewelry. “Finally, our initial architect, Carolyn Bemis, said, ‘Listen, your jewelry is so modern, why not find a shell of a house to make over in your own style?’” That clicked with the couple. What they wanted, says Downie, was “a modern, two-bedroom home with subtle detailing and simple lines.”

The couple settled on a vacant 1883 Harlem brownstone that

had retained not one single original interior detail, providing a clean slate for the two modernists to create a home with an open living/dining/kitchen plan on the first floor, a second-floor master suite with a study for Downie and a studio for Zimmermann along with a guest room on the third. They turned the garden-level floor into a rental unit.

The problem—typical of row houses—was a long and narrow interior with windows only at the distant short ends. Maximizing light and gaining space, both real and illusory, became the focus of the project.

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