

*The Virtual Flea Market: Collecting with a Click*

# Metropolitan

## All Home

Design News:  
Calvin Klein &  
Nudja Swarovski

# INSIDE THE BOX

**S**ome people build their dream homes; others come upon them by serendipity. One couple—she's a commercial real-estate appraiser, he a Columbia University urban-planning professor—discovered the house of their dreams while scouring real-estate listings online after looking for a weekend getaway in the rolling hills of Columbia County, New York, for several years. Their full-time residence is a brownstone in Brooklyn, but they wanted more modern surroundings upstate. They found exactly what they were looking for in a minimalist house on eight bucolic acres.

The house is striking in its long, angular lines and muted palette of tough industrial materials: black aluminum siding, translucent polycarbonate cladding and aluminum-framed windows and doors outside; whitewashed drywall and polished-concrete and painted-wood floors inside. "I fell in love with it instantly," recalls the wife.

The previous owners of the home were also its designers: David Leven and Stella Betts, the married partners of the New York City firm Leven Betts Studio Architects. The pair drew inspiration from the site, a former cornfield, and the lines etched into the earth by years of tractor wheels and plow blades. Leven and Betts emphasized those linear markings by dividing the house into two long, conjoined volumes. One contains the kitchen, bathrooms and laundry room (neatly ganging together all the home's plumbing), the other a lofty living/dining area and a pair of bedrooms upstairs.

This page: The two volumes of the house are wrapped in skins with differing degrees of transparency: opaque (black aluminum siding); translucent (polycarbonate panels); and clear (windows and glass doors). Opposite: A 20-foot-long Corian island cantilevered above the concrete floor holds an Elkay sink with Dornbracht fixtures. The *Four* painted-steel dining table and folding *Dolly* chairs are from Kartell.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTIAN SCHAULIN. WRITTEN BY RAUL BARRENECHE.

Inside the two-bedroom, 2,000-square-foot home, Leven and Betts stuck to a monochromatic palette of white walls (Benjamin Moore's Superwhite), white-tiled bathrooms and painted wood floors in the upstairs bedrooms. (The floors downstairs are polished concrete embedded with radiant heating.) For the architects, whiteness doesn't come from just paint or tiles. "We wanted to play with different levels of glow and different degrees of shine," says Betts. "So there are whites that are opaque, translucent and transparent, and surfaces that are matte, semigloss and glossy."

There's a mix of white tones and textures in every room, especially the kitchen—"a great place to cook," says the wife, who frequents Columbia County's plentiful farm stands and organic farmers' markets. A 20-foot-long Corian-wrapped island, inspired by the boxy sculptures of famed minimalist artist Donald Judd, floats in front of a wall of semigloss painted cabinets.

Above the counter (opposite), the frosted-acrylic treads of a second-floor staircase admit natural light from a skylight, adding to the kitchen's brightness. The bedrooms also glow with daylight softly filtered through polycarbonate walls and reflected off white floors and walls. "It's like being in a cloud," says Betts. "Creating a muted palette for the interior really draws your eye outside."

The owners kept the furnishings muted, too. Aside from brightly colored rugs in the bedrooms, all of the furniture sticks to shades of gray, taupe and, of course, white. The subdued palette lets the changing colors of the landscape become part of the interiors.

This page, from left: Alongside the kitchen, a steel staircase enclosed in acrylic leads to the second-floor bedrooms; architects Stella Betts and David Leven stand in their all-white Manhattan studio (to the right of colleague Fernando Tirado). Opposite: In the ultra-minimalist kitchen, a white Gaggenau oven floats within a wall of painted MDF cupboards. The bentwood *Taburet M* stool is by Jørgen Møller.



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