

style reclaimed

A LUXE CONDO IN THE HEART OF BERLIN RIFFS ON THE CITY'S SIGNATURE CONTRAST OF OLD AND NEW.
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Opposite: The front hallway is both simple and practical. It's not a large space, so Lim kept its design clean and clutter-free. The bench has no legs—it appears to float in space—and is unadorned, matching the shelves on the opposite wall. A large mirror opens up the space while serving a practical purpose, too. Lim loves how the living room is slightly elevated. "It's as if it's set on a stage," he says.

This page: A punching bag hangs in the central living area, like a whimsical piece of art. "We wanted to give off a pre-war, German-athletic-club feeling throughout," explains Lim. It provides a subtle dose of humour to a very elegant space.



● Gary Lim is the ultimate host. As the founder of Glispa, a digital marketing company based in Berlin, Lim—who was born and raised in Minnesota—is used to a constant flow of out-of-town visitors: clients, partner companies, family, friends. Rather than putting them up in a hotel—or showing them to a guest bedroom—Lim designed an elegant, 150-square-metre apartment especially for them. He lives on a different floor in the same building in Berlin’s bustling Mitte district (the city’s culture hub), and Lim says he likes the idea of having guests nearby while allowing them their own private space.

With a budget of roughly \$100,000 US, Lim enlisted the help of interior designer Annabell Kutucu and stylist Michael Schickinger to create an inviting space where guests are just as likely to curl up with a good book as they are to brainstorm business ideas. Together they chose black and grey as the dominant colours, taking their cue from the existing pale-grey cabinetry in the kitchen. They also kept the original wood flooring throughout, maintaining a feeling of warmth in an otherwise sleek space. As Lim explains, “We wanted to recreate the contrast of Berlin as a city, the contrast between old and new.” ●

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Opposite: In the living room, Lim opted for classic mid-century modern pieces, including easy chairs by Hans J. Wegner and a bench by Harry Bertoia for Knoll (used here as a coffee table). The rich wood, along with linen drapes and layers of soft-grey rugs, contrasts nicely with a black leather sofa to create a cool, yet cosy, space that feels very urban-sophisticate. Added to the mix are miscellaneous items—a globe, vintage record player, scattered books—that lend a deliberately lived-in feel. The black ceiling was inspired by a hallway in Lim’s former apartment in Brazil. “In the master bedroom, there was a wall of closet doors. One of them actually opened to a hallway that led to a hidden bathroom,” recalls Lim. “The ceiling was low and made from dark wood. It felt cosy, like you were entering a sauna.” He was aiming for the same relaxed feeling in

the living room, where local artist Mark Owen hand-painted the lyrics to David Bowie’s “Heroes.” (The song, released in 1977, was written after Bowie looked out of his recording studio window and spotted a man and woman kissing on the heavily guarded Berlin Wall).

Above and right: In keeping with the laid-back vibe, Lim eschewed traditional tile for the backsplash, choosing chalkboard paint instead. He leaves out chalk for visitors, who will often scribble notes and drawings. It’s these types of personal touches that contribute to the apartment’s charm. “A lot of people have stayed here and many have left things behind—maybe a magazine or something for our photo wall [in the living room]. It all adds to the personality of the place,” says Lim.



There's an interesting mix of modern and vintage furnishings throughout the apartment. In the kitchen, Lim retained the grey cabinetry and sleek appliances and outfitted the space with vintage finds, including Dutch chairs and a light fixture from a French train station. The result is a room that isn't overly polished but instead feels warm and inviting; guests could be encouraged to linger after a meal.



Left: In the hallway, Lim once again mixes old and new. The doors are reclaimed wood from a hut in the Swiss Alps, while a vibrant piece of art features singer-songwriter Lana Del Rey (a reinterpretation of a February 2012 Interview magazine cover). The red in the painting adds an unexpected element of colour and warmth to a mostly monochromatic space. Lim says the idea was sparked by the pillows along the living-room windowsill. “They’re beige with red streaks—that looked nice in terms of picking one dash of colour that would stick out.”

Above: Lim and his team paid close attention to sightlines throughout the apartment. Here, there’s a harmonious feeling, thanks to a single palette that’s both calming and fresh.

Right: A mini-workstation in one of the three bedrooms features a vintage desk inspired by French engineer and designer Jean Prouvé and an iconic Kaiser-idell lamp, designed in the 1930s by German silversmith Christian Dell. It’s a nook that fosters creativity, with its view of an inner courtyard and buildings in the distance.



Left: In the master bedroom, the focal point is an original piece of map art by Mark Owen—an interpretation of Lim’s old-meets-new city theme. Lim was hoping to achieve a sense of playfulness in this space—evidenced here by two bedside Spiderman lamps (his young nephews gravitated toward this room on a recent visit). The result is a master bedroom that feels slick and urban, but doesn’t take itself too seriously.

BEAUTY IN CONTRASTS

- The palette of black and warm greys—in tones from pale ash to deep charcoal—is the foundation of this home’s unique personality, yet every room has white walls or ceilings that reflect light and offset the greys, preventing a cave-like drabness.
- The delicate lines of mid-century modern furniture have a see-through, weightless quality that leaves sightlines unobstructed.
- Black ceilings have a cocooning effect in the living room and hall, while white ceilings create an open, inviting look for the kitchen and foyer.
- The kitchen offers an object lesson in layering colour: greys of the same tonal value—that is, on the warm, red side of the spectrum—appear in shades from light to dark, providing variation and interest, while the combined effect is harmoniously monochromatic.
- Medium-toned warm wood floors provide a unifying thread throughout the home.
- Industrial-age features—steel frames, metal finishes, raw wood—neatly complement the contemporary preference for understatement—minimal trim, simple or non-existent hardware, repetition rather than variation.—*Staff*

The stonewashed linen curtains in the bedroom—the same as those in the living room—lend flow and continuity to the space. The dramatic effect, enhanced by a dark-grey accent wall, is offset by crisp white bedding.



Because the bedroom is small with a high ceiling, Lim worried that a built-in closet would dominate the space. Still, he wanted to make the room practical for guests. The solution was a custom-made, industrial-style steel structure typical of a New York loft—ideal for storing clothes, but also for displaying antiques and giving the room a comfortable, homey feel.

