



By Ivan Meade

Photographed by Joshua Lawrence

WHITE SPACE

Leaving behind Manhattan's frenzy for Victoria's calm, acclaimed New York architect/designer James Gauer transformed a Shutters condominium into a space so heavenly minimalist, it's almost like living on a cloud.





FUNCTIONAL LIVING

For small spaces, choose furniture that serves multi-functions. The leather and fabric chairs can be turned to face the fireplace for contemplation, or toward the sofa for conversation. The sofa is usually the largest investment piece in a room, says Gauer, so it's important to choose a high-quality piece that will hold its beauty over time.

SOPHISTICATED SUBTERFUGE

To hide the baseboards, Gauer cleverly introduced a teak and bamboo architectural detail. He also brilliantly incorporated the use of shadow lines where the floor meets the baseboards, and around doors and cupboards, to conceal any natural imperfections of the space.





FOCUS AND FLOW

To create better flow in the space, Gauer changed the floor plan, essentially making the living room and master bedroom into one large room. The room is divided by a partition flanked by space-saving aluminum and white glass pocket doors. The perimeter walls and ceiling are painted in Benjamin Moore Super White, and the partition in Benjamin Moore Ashwood soft grey, which gives it the effect of floating.

An ethanol fireplace is tucked into custom ceruse oak cabinets, topped with Calacatta marble. The sophisticated use of horizontal lines in the furnishings, cabinetry handles, and architectural details, defines the focal point of the room — the fireplace.



For James Gauer, minimalism is more than an approach to design — it's a philosophy of life where excess is not essential to living well, and where the home should serve our wellbeing, not force us to serve its overpriced, overfilled appetite.

Five years ago, the acclaimed New York architect/designer and author of *The New American Dream: Living Well in Small Homes*, traded a 500-square-foot flat in Manhattan for the relative serenity of Victoria. With Victoria's more accessible market, it might have been tempting to expand, but Gauer and his partner Joel Goldsmith still opted to live small.

After discovering the architect of the curving, clean-lined Shutters development on the Inner Harbour was none other than James K.M. Cheng — whose glass towers are icons of the style known as Vancouverism — Gauer and Goldsmith purchased a 1,250-square-foot unit there after seeing only the floorplans.

But that's not to say they actually *liked* the floorplans. In fact, the first thing they did was change them. To open the space up and improve flow, they reconfigured closets and a powder room near the front door to create a welcoming foyer that opens to the full length and breadth of the unit. They also joined the living room and master bedroom into one large space — separated by a partition — that takes full advantage of the condo's 45 linear feet of floor-to-ceiling windows with harbour views.

Amazingly, with these design changes, and despite being of a modest size, the condo now has room for a master bedroom, living room, a kitchen, two full baths, one powder room, and two offices which also serve as guest rooms — and *lots* of storage.

The space contains no more and no less than Gauer and Goldsmith need to live happily. Every piece of furniture, every object, serves a purpose and fits Gauer's credo: *everything must be beautiful*. And that's surprisingly easy to do when you know what really matters to you.



SMALL SPACE DESIGN

Floating the furniture — raising it up to allow for clearance underneath — creates the illusion that a room is larger than it actually is. This bedroom features a custom-made headboard in the same grain as the wood in the kitchen and living-room cabinets. This attention to how materials relate to one another is key to creating flow.



OPEN TO CREATIVITY

A narrow hall between the foyer and the kitchen became more spacious when opened up to the kitchen. The custom shelves, featuring the photography of Gauer's partner, Joel Goldsmith, are set back two-and-half-inches so they don't interfere with traffic flow.

Glass-front upper cabinets are ideal for small spaces, giving a feeling of airiness. The custom stainless steel drawer pulls are echoed throughout the apartment on cabinets, doors, and furnishings, another example of tying everything together to create a feeling of unity.

Open the door to new possibilities.

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COMPOSING CALM

In the office, Hunter Douglas Silhouette blinds maximize privacy without blocking light. IKEA shelves set into a recess in the wall mimic the appearance of built-ins. ("It's how you play with these pieces and put them together in an architectural way," says Gauer.) The artful composition of books and art ties in with Gauer's philosophy that everything in his space should be beautiful.

At either end of the sofa, Tolomeo lamps by Artemide create relaxing light, eliminating the need for cluttering end tables and lamps. A Herman Miller office chair is the design *piece de resistance*.



SIMPLICITY AND SYMMETRY

Two small offices showcase visual symmetry. By mirroring each other, they make the space appear larger or smaller as the doors are opened and closed. Floor-to-ceiling aluminum pocket doors with white glass allow the passage of light while maintaining privacy. Whereas details such as built-in shelving are often the first to go in small spaces, Gauer feels it is these details that truly elevate a design beyond the ordinary.



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THE SMALLEST SPACE

Breaking free from Shutters' original design specifications, Gauer extended the limestone floor tiles 42 inches up the walls of this powder room to create a sense of flow and continuity. The room was originally larger, but Gauer opted to decrease its size to create more space in the foyer. The door's pivot hinges make it appear part of the wall when it is closed. A floating sink, perfect for small bathrooms, doesn't take up floor space and creates a feeling of more space.

SOURCES

Designer: James Gauer architecture + design

General Contractor: Gordon Dangerfield, Right Hand Builders

Painting Contractor: Indelible Paint Works

Millwork: Window sill and library shelves: Steve Burgess; MBR headboard: Ernie Schellenberg

Audio Visual: Sound Hounds

Product Resources: "Feng" sectional: Didier Gomez for Ligne Roset, from Living Space; "Contours" coffee table: Didier Gomez for Ligne Roset, from Living Space; "Cinema" lounge chairs (by fireplace): ICF; EcoSmart fireplace: Vancouver Gas Fireplaces; "Risom" lounge chair (in MBR): Jens Risom for Knoll; draperies: Ruffel and Brown; "Aladina" dining chair: Luciano Bertocini for Bellato, from Living Space; dining banquette: custom design by James Gauer, fabrics by Knoll, fabrication by Peter Michl Furniture & Upholstery

Art Resources: Painting: Maria Middleton; photos above dining banquette: Doug Schwab; photos above fireplace and in gallery across from kitchen: Joel Goldsmith; photos above headboard: James Gauer

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