

SMART DESIGN FOR METRO LIVING

THE NEW
CITY HOME



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A SENSITIVE SEPARATION

DESIGN CHALLENGE > *to create a comfortable, productive live/work environment*

Working and living in the same space isn't always what it's cracked up to be. Sure, there's no commute to worry about and you can shuffle around your home office in fuzzy slippers and dressing gown, but there is a downside. The phone can ring well beyond business hours, the temptation to work all the time (or not at all) is omnipresent, and chronic cabin fever wars with the disquieting feeling of occupying a perpetually open house, with colleagues and clients constantly passing in and out. What could be called a "disciplined flexibility" in both habits and habitat is at the core of a comfortable, productive living/working environment.

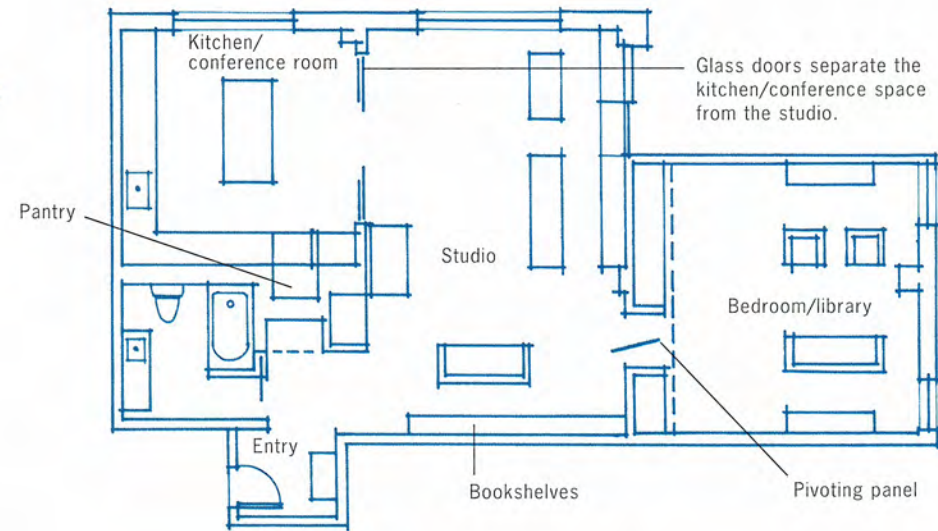
A WELL-ORDERED ATELIER

The central part of this 12th-floor loft is given over to homeowner Page Goolrick's architecture studio. It's simply appointed and laid out, with no-frills desks and drafting tables spaced widely apart, emphasizing the openness of the room. Low-slung filing cabinets edge the walls, and computer equipment—the aesthetic bane of most offices on the planet—is neatly placed in niches on the desk pedestals, with cords and wires corralled in pliable plastic conduit. Across the room from the window, bookcases loaded with supplies and documents capitalize on the 14-ft. height. In the studio and the other rooms, clear maple floors and white walls and ceilings bounce natural light through the space.

OPPOSITE Where public and private areas coexist, the architectural detailing must be disciplined. Meticulously clean lines—the absence of boxy wall cabinets, cooking paraphernalia, and bulky appliances—allow the kitchen to double as a conference room.



DUAL-PURPOSE DESIGN



ABOVE With picture windows, views are simultaneously part of the interior and the outdoors; the windows act as a framed photograph. In this kitchen, the view of the southern Manhattan skyline is very much a presence during meals or meetings.

There's no mistaking this room as a place that means business. But many live/work situations are porous, letting little things from domestic life infiltrate the work area: a television, a microwave oven, or a too-comfy chair. However well- (or un-) intentioned, such spillover has greater consequences than being unsightly or incongruous; it dilutes the sense of purpose assigned to a particular space. And that effect goes both ways. If the dining table has been taken over by office sprawl or the bedroom has been co-opted by a special business project, it's easy to lose sight of the sanctity of the home. Should it be absolutely necessary for personal and professional functions to overlap in a single location, it's got to be planned down to the last detail. This loft contains a terrific, albeit unlikely, example of a successful crossover space: The kitchen is also a conference room.

THE COVERT KITCHEN PLAYS A DOUBLE ROLE

Even under strictly residential circumstances, the kitchen—with its full complement of large and small appliances and diverse, specialized storage needs—can be problematic to design. When it comes to dealing with the kitchen in home/office combos, a common approach is to shrink it down and seal it off, essentially turning it into a closet with a stove and refrigerator. Such a move might be appropriate for a coffee-break room in a big, button-down firm, but this setting—as a casual, live/work environment—obviously has a



ABOVE Neatness counts in live/work scenarios. Subtly concealed behind translucent plastic-film doors and reached by a wheeled ladder, a bank of bookcases efficiently organizes documents and samples in the architect's studio.

different agenda. Goolrick decided to make a quiet showcase of the room while casting it in an ambiguous role. She separated the 20-ft. by 20-ft. space from the studio with a set of industrial but elegant glass doors.

Inside the room, base cabinets run along two walls and are topped by a stretch of brushed stainless steel. There's ample pin-up space and projection areas for presentations. A utility cart can be wheeled out from the counter and positioned where it's needed. Appliances are strictly of the under-counter variety—even the cooking hobs are hidden under hinged sections of steel. Only the arc of a polished chrome faucet breaks the horizontal plane. So seamless is the design that the space can be used for meetings with clients without compromising the professional atmosphere. All this, and the basic kitchen facilities—for cooking, cleaning, and storage—remain intact and undiminished.





ABOVE Looks can—and at times must—be deceiving when trying to keep up appearances. Because of its role as a meeting room, a lot of the storage this kitchen needs had to go undercover. A hidden pantry is located behind a counter-height cart that rolls out from the wall. Stainless-steel lids camouflage the cooktop.

RIGHT In work-at-home designs, it is important to maintain a physical and psychological separation between the two functions. Hidden behind a pivoting panel, the bedroom-cum-library is the loft's only wholly private space.

A THICK WALL PROVIDES A BUFFER BETWEEN WORK AND LIVING SPACES

While the integration of two different functions was very much the point in the kitchen/conference-room area, the separation of functions was the prime objective when planning the private space of the loft. Because virtually every action, every day, is concentrated under one roof in live/work arrangements, an intense lifestyle is often the result. For that reason, having a buffer between these two worlds—one that offers not just a physical retreat but some psychological relief as well—is key. Put another way, it's important to be able to get away without having to go away. If you're dedicating the better part of your waking hours to running a home-based business, there had better be something more substantial than a hollow-core door marking the boundary between the living room and your livelihood.

Goolrick's solution creates a genuine sense of passage without squandering space with a conventional corridor. Breached by a pivoting panel, a 28-in.-thick wall divides the bedroom from the studio. Pushing open the door and walking through it, there's a palpable feeling of transition; once over the threshold, the ambience takes a distinct turn toward the personal. The windows are smaller and sport shades; the couch and armchairs offer soft, upholstered contours; and the room itself is more intimately proportioned. Even though the office is less than a yard away, the sense of separation is complete.

The wall literally has a practical side to it. In the bedroom, it provides a veritable mother lode of storage. Clothes closets, a television, and books rise to the ceiling; a rolling ladder, attached midway up the wall, puts the contents within reach. It's the final underscore to the significance of careful spatial planning on both a large and small scale in a multipurpose environment.



ABOVE "Making room" sometimes means tearing an existing room apart. As part of her campaign to reclaim every inch of usable space, Goolrick stripped off wallboard that disguised utility stacks but took up precious floor area. A partial second floor that sliced through the bedroom/library was also removed.



LEFT In one-room living, sleeping accommodations need to be inconspicuous. Shielded by a folding screen by day, that classic space conserver, the Murphy bed, puts in a nightly appearance in the bedroom.

BELOW In compact city quarters, a wall that merely divides space is either an indulgence or a wasted opportunity. This wall between the office and the bedroom is built out to 28 in. in order to contain books and clothing. As in the studio, a library ladder provides access to storage on the upper levels.



CLIMBING THE WALLS |

It's a tall order. Lacking a garage and famously short on storage for big items, city dwellers typically don't have the luxury of keeping a stepladder on the premises. How, then, to cope with overhead tasks like changing a ceiling fixture or replacing a book on the uppermost shelf of a 14-ft. wall? Here are some space-conscious ways to scale the heights.

Toekick step stool. Designed for those times when you just need a boost up to the top shelf of the kitchen cupboard, this device can be stowed under a bathroom vanity, bookcase, or wherever there's raised cabinetry. Talk about getting the most out of underutilized space: Folded flat, the stool slips into a section of

the cabinet plinth where it remains out of sight yet within easy reach.

Ship ladder. A generic label for an installation where rungs and grab rails are permanently attached to the wall in a strictly vertical path. Occupying no floor area to speak of, it's good for fixed, frequent access, like climbing up to a loft bed. But because it's not a hands-free ascent, ship

ladders aren't suitable for situations where you're carrying loads up or down. A variation for the very agile: frame foothold cavities into the wall.

Rolling ladder. There are two basic types of wheeled ladders. Freestanding models, similar to stairs, can be positioned anywhere they're needed. While they're sturdy, stabile, and add a sculptural note to

a room, they also gobble up a lot of floor space. The other style of rolling ladder slides along an elevated rail or track that's bracketed to the wall. Standing parallel to the wall when not in use, it easily pulls out to a comfortable incline for climbing. Some models can be adapted to turn corners.

