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was obvious: Their passion for minimalist design matched his. "I jumped at the opportunity," recalls the architect.

What transpired over a six-month period was a complex surgical procedure intended to transform a dreary prewar apartment into a modern loft. "We built models and did perspective drawings," says Pulver, "and lots of elevations." Ultimately, the Abbinks and their architect settled on four major design moves.

First, they decided to eliminate the wall that divided the second bedroom from the living room to create an open living/dining/work space. "We had a version that we wanted," Jeanette explains, "like a glass cube inside the apartment. But we couldn't afford it." Instead, they united the two rooms with an opening so traditional looking it could easily have been there since 1925. Still, even the double-size room proved too snug for their extralong 1971 Charles Pfister-designed Knoll sofa. They sold it on Craigslist and replaced it with a matching two-seater and chaise from Design Within Reach designed by Danish-born Canadian designer Niels Bendtsen. Perhaps the most eye-catching item in the room is the light fixture that hangs over their Swedish dining table. Patrick Townsend, the Queens-based designer of the Orbit chandelier, likens his wiry creation to a suspension bridge, but it looks suspiciously like a giant eggbeater.

The second big move was to transform the typically skinny New York apartment kitchen with the kind of high-end Italian system you'd normally find sitting in the middle of 5,000 square feet of open plan. "In California we lived near the Arclinea showroom," explains Jeanette. "When I was walking to work I would think, Oh, it's so beautiful. I really like the finish, and I like Antonio Citterio, the designer." Fortunately, she had made friends with the San Francisco Arclinea representative, and he worked with Pulver to shoehorn Citterio's Convivium system into a very tight space. The result is impressive. There's a built-in double-decker Miele oven (and a three-tier Miele steamer, good for vegetables and indoor clambakes) and a Sub-Zero refrigerator and freezer under the counter, distributed into four unobtrusive drawers.

Mike points out that when you get rid of the bulky traditional refrigerator, even a narrow apartment kitchen opens up and yields unexpected amounts of storage space. He happily demonstrates that underneath the five-burner Gaggenau cooktop are drawers holding lots of pots and pans. (For a few moments, all four of us—clients, architect, reporter—stand in the kitchen, pulling white lacquer-coated drawers out and gliding them back in, transfixed by a motion so silky that you'd imagine the Italians have been fine-tuning it since Nervi. Then we hear a crunching noise from the living room and discover that Stig, the Abbinks' hyperkinetic Welsh terrier, is devouring the bowl of smoked almonds that was sitting so prettily on the extralow marble-topped Zanotta coffee table.) ▶

The Abbinks' apartment is a study in details, from the stainless steel kitchen countertop to the clever Arclinea rail system that holds their salt and pepper, to the Skinny coffee table (perfect for unauthorized doggy dining) by Prospero Rasulo for Zanotta and Jeanette's growing collection of Stig Lindberg and Bjorn Wiinblad ceramics.



A narrow hallway, typical of prewar apartments, doubles as an art gallery lined with woodcut type studies by graphic artist Jack Stauffacher, type sketches by Erik Spiekermann, and photography by Catherine Opie and Catherine Ledner. In the bedroom Aalto stools stand in for night tables next to the Legnoletto bed by Alfredo Häberli for Alias.



The kitchen is a miracle of efficiency, with Antonio Citterio's Convivium system for Arclinea shoehorned into a tight galley layout. The built-in Miele oven has storage above, and the Sub-Zero drawers are far less bulky than a freestanding bulky refrigerator. The Carrara marble countertop and backsplash were custom cut by Brooklyn's Acme Marble Co.

