



ABOVE: WALTER GROPIUS'S GRAND CURVING FACADE IN BERLIN'S HANSAVIERTEL. RIGHT: IN THE LIBRARY, THE CLEAR THINKING IMPLIED BY THE TRANSPARENT DESK AND CHAIR (REMINISCENT OF RIETVELD'S 'ZIGZAG' CHAIR) IS, SAYS RESIDENT PETER SCHLESSELMANN, A LOT TO LIVE UP TO. BELOW: THE MOVIE POSTER OF *CAMILLE* HONOURS PETER'S LONG-TIME INFATUATION WITH GRETA GARBO. OPPOSITE: INGE FELTRINELLI'S 1952 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE STAR ON MADISON AVENUE HANGS ABOVE A WINDSOR CHAIR, PAINTED WHITE BY THE OWNER





Eye-popping colours once used in Modernist interiors have softened with the passage of time, but architect Gisbert Pöpler has re-created their original intensity in a curving 1950s apartment block in Berlin designed by Walter Gropius. But with its painted furniture, Ikea kitchen and vintage movie posters, the flat is no slavish tribute, as Michael Huey reports. Photography: Fritz von der Schulenburg

THE PÖPLER EFFECT

THE LIVING/DINING ROOM'S BOLD FIELDS OF PRIMARY COLOURS ARE EDGED IN BLACK TO MINIMISE OPTICAL MIXING. THE FORM OF JEREMY COLE'S 'BLOSSOM' CHANDELIER IS THE PERFECT VISUAL METAPHOR FOR THE EXPLOSION OF COLOUR, ONE SOON TO BE AMPLIFIED: THE DINING CHAIRS ARE TO BE REUPHOLSTERED IN ELECTRIC BLUE. THE TALL WHITE LACQUERED CABINET WAS DESIGNED BY GIBERT PÖPLER







ABOVE: THE FURNISHINGS ARE AN INFORMAL MIX RATHER THAN PERFECTLY PERIOD. RIGHT: THIS 1930s CHEST OF DRAWERS AND LATE BIEDERMEIER ARMCHAIR ARE TWO OF THE VERY FEW THINGS TO HAVE MADE IT OVER FROM THE OWNER'S OLD FLAT. BELOW: THE HANDLES AND PULLS IN THE KITCHEN COST ALMOST AS MUCH AS THE IKEA UNITS. OPPOSITE: IN THE BEDROOM, WALLS AND CEILING ARE THE EXACT REVERSE OF THE LIVING/DINING ROOM'S COLOUR SCHEME. THE RUG IS A 1930S REPRODUCTION BY BERLIN COMPANY TEPPICH.DE







PETER SCHLESSELMANN is a designer's dream client. 'I'd also have said yes to grey on grey,' admits the TV writer in his new Berlin living/dining room, which his architect and friend, Gisbert Pöppler, persuaded him to fit out instead with canary-yellow walls, a red floor, black trim, a plum-coloured couch and chairs that are about to be upholstered electric blue. After giving Pöppler's plan his approval, Schlesselmann stopped by to check on things only twice – and then reluctantly – during construction. Then he moved in with no further fuss. 'It's kind of thrilling to allow oneself to venture into something,' he says, calmly pouring a cup of tea from a white china pot.

Aesthetically speaking, white is where he came from: before this, he lived in a prewar building with high ceilings, stucco work and parquet floors. Coming to this new apartment meant getting rid of nearly everything he possessed. Schlesselmann grasps that his happiness, like that of Schubert's 'wanderer', is where he is not. Shyly, almost wistfully, he says that his wish had actually been to retain some 'reminiscences' – meaning either reminiscences of his old place or of the original space here. At this, the architect, who is also present, raises an eyebrow and says: 'Ach, so?' But even the things Schlesselmann possessed that might have fitted here had to go, because they might have fitted too well. On this both architect and client were in total agreement.

The apartment is located in Berlin's Hansaviertel, in the northwest corner of the Tiergarten park, in a Modern-era Interbau apartment building designed by Walter Gropius for the 1957 International Building Exhibition. Yet the sofa

I'm sitting on, the architect calls to my attention, 'isn't Arne Jacobsen'. The point being that, despite the building's credentials, Pöppler deliberately avoided turning the flat into a Gropius museum or a tribute to 1950s Modernism.

On the other hand, the palette, he explains, does have a logical connection to the Master himself. The colours of the panels on the façades outside the bedroom window played a central role in its having been chosen, as did a visit to newly restored interiors at the Bauhaus in Dessau, now historically correct and bright-coloured – shockingly so to some visitors with stark preconceived design ideas.

Pöppler also keyed in to Gropius's original intent, that all the apartments in the building would have variable floor plans. It justified his ripping out the dividing wall between kitchen and living room, which brought in light and an expansive panorama of the building's curved exterior façade. Viewing it from a greater distance within the apartment makes its arc all the more dynamic, and the interior space considerably more generous.

In opposition to the arc, the 90sq m flat has as its backbone a long straight entry hall that more or less divides the floor plan in two, with 'public' rooms clustered along one side and 'private' rooms along the other. With the hallway doors open, the vigorous public and private hues glow back onto the neutral foyer walls. Colours play tricks in this apartment: the bedroom and living room have an identical scheme, only with the wall and ceiling tones reversed. In real life, they look like they came from different colour charts, as do the ceilings along the public side, which are all the same blue but react differently to the wall colours from one room to the next.

Schlesselmann and Pöppler guide me through the hall doors to an emerald-green study, a Chinese-red kitchen, an aqua-blue and yellow bedroom, and an intricately tiled bathroom. They don't permit me, however, to visit the one room that makes all this aesthetic rigour possible: the storage room. (It is an ample one, I infer, and one quite possibly stocked with certain crucial reminiscences, after all.) It leads – like Garbo, Schlesselmann's idol since he saw *Camille* on TV aged 12 – an elusive, reclusive existence. Meanwhile, mysterious, ineffable Garbo herself, in the form of a fortuitously tinted vintage movie poster in the hall, quietly unites all the disparate colours of the neighbouring rooms.

Garbo could afford good shoes, but, as the saying goes, the shoemaker's son always goes barefoot: Pöppler – his motto is 'All or nothing at all' – lives in far less colourful rooms than those of his ideal client. 'Simply too much time and effort just for living,' he confides. Schlesselmann takes it philosophically. He had hoped that moving here might help him 'live more clearly and thus think more clearly, but, if I'm honest about it, I'm not sure that has happened.' As long as the apartment continues to be a work in progress, at least, he's happy. 'But I'm a little worried,' he says, referring to some future date when everything will be finished, 'about what will happen then' ■

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OPPOSITE: THE TERRACE IS LEVEL WITH THE CROWNS OF TREES IN THE GROUNDS. THIS PAGE: THE BATHROOM – LIKE THE BEDROOM, ON THE 'PRIVATE' SIDE OF THE LONG ENTRY HALL – FEATURES SMALL TILES THAT ARE BOTH A NOD TO THE PAST AND YET A HIGHLY CONTEMPORARY TOUCH. THE MIRRORRED CABINETS ARE AVAILABLE FROM MANUFACTUM AND THE SINK – 'RENOVA NO. 1' – IS BY KERAMAG

