

ANGLE POISE

GLASS WALLS, ARCHITECTURAL PLANTS AND SLOPING SHELVES AND DOORS
GIVE AN OLD APARTMENT IN VIENNA A MODERN SLANT.

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THIS PAGE: a glass wall with a bank of shelves on either side of it separates the work and living spaces, while retaining a sense of openness. Built-in planters filled with grass add texture to the minimally furnished space. 'We grew up in the country, so we wanted greenery, but we didn't want anything too "loud"', says the flat's owner, Christian Will. 'Grass is simple and quite architectural, plus it's very easy to maintain - I just cut it with a pair of scissors every couple of months.' **OPPOSITE:** the study's oak wall contrasts with the white shelves and highlights their interesting lines - rather than horizontal, they are all at a slant, as Christian's brother and architect Johannes believes that irregular angles create impact in a minimal space. In the living area, 'Aip 2' chairs by Rodolfo Dordoni for Minotti are teamed with a wooden table by Johannes. The sofa is by Piero Lissoni for Cassina and the paper pendant lamp is by Ingo Maurer. 'This flat wouldn't be right for someone who wants a cosy feel', says Johannes, 'but it suits my pilot brother perfectly, because he needs lots of space to move around in after spending hours in the cockpit.' ▶

DESIGNING A HOME FOR YOUR BROTHER: DREAM JOB OR NIGHTMARE? THAT DEPENDS ON HOW MUCH LOVE AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, TRUST THERE IS BETWEEN YOU.

Johannes and Christian Will are the sons of an architect, but while Johannes has followed in his father's footsteps, designing for the family firm, Will, as well as under his own name, Christian became a pilot for Tyrolean Airlines. Design is, however, still in Christian's blood and he has always aspired to owning an architect-designed home: 'It's the equivalent of wearing a handmade suit', he says. So when he found this flat in an old Viennese apartment block, he immediately saw its potential for modernisation and decided that Johannes was the only man for the job.

Christian's brief to Johannes was simple: 'I want a glass wall in the bathroom.' That was it. Nothing else. Being familiar with architects, Christian knew he'd get the best results if he left the brief wide open. And, being familiar with Christian, Johannes knew just what his brother would like. As Christian explains, 'Johannes understands me – my personality, my emotions and how I want to live. We're good friends.' Johannes was delighted: 'In my opinion, the more freedom the client gives, the better the end result.'

The brothers started by stripping the apartment down to its basics, taking out every possible internal wall until only the shell remained. Then they thought very carefully about what they were prepared to put back. They decided to make the most of the space by doing away with individual rooms, in favour of more fluid zones, which, says Johannes, 'communicate with each other via glass walls and large, ceiling-height openings, rather than conventional doors'.

The idea was to create a relaxed, open lounge-bar feel. Even the bathroom is on show – thanks to that glass wall. This decision did not go down very well with Christian's girlfriend, Birgit, who shares the apartment. 'I think that women prefer more privacy in the bathroom than men,' says Christian, 'but after she took her first bath, she rang my brother and told him he was right to do it – she loved the feeling of space!' The loo is, however, separate, as is the bedroom, since Christian often needs to sleep through the day after working on night flights.

HOW IT WAS DONE

Like many architects, Johannes is somewhat obsessive about light, and the final layout of the apartment was determined by the path of the sun. So morning activities, like showering and eating breakfast, take place on the east side of the apartment, while the living space runs along the west side, where it capitalises on the afternoon sun. And once the sun has set, you realise that he has paid special attention to the apartment's artificial light, too. No glaring bulbs here. Most light sources are hidden away – in niches or behind panels – for a soft, glowing effect.

Another of Johannes's passions is slightly more unusual – a love of slanting surfaces. Throughout the apartment are diagonal doorways and sloping shelves. The idea is to give a little 'added value' to the space, without cluttering it up, he says. 'Interesting lines make you notice and appreciate the scale of the apartment by leading the eye up and around the space, as well as creating shadow play.' Best of all, for Johannes, is the way it makes things magically tactile. 'If you walk alongside a slanting wall, you want to touch it, engage with it. People can't help themselves!' he adds.


What is particularly impressive, though, is the flat's extraordinary tidiness. Do Christian and Birgit live like monks, eschewing material possessions? No, it's just that, aware of Christian's fastidiousness, Johannes gave him the cupboard space to put everything away. There's a bank of white cupboards along one side of the kitchen that contains most of the couple's stuff, as well as extra storage tucked away behind the bathroom mirror, above the bed's padded headboard... everywhere. 'Everything's hidden, so it looks nice all the time – that's very important,' says Johannes.

This monastic minimalism might not be for everyone – certainly not those who love to surround themselves with beloved treasures – but for Christian, it's paradise. 'I love everything about this flat: it's the perfect place to relax and lounge around with friends after a hard day's flying across Europe,' he says. 'The problem is I never want to go out!' Ask Christian about the only decorative pieces in the flat – a pair of glass vases on the living room shelves – and he ruefully says, 'Ah, my girlfriend bought those... I wasn't very happy.' Nonetheless, he is prepared to add a little more to the apartment – some art, perhaps. 'But it's just so hard to find the perfect piece,' he explains. Too bad there's not a painter in the family... **DECO** ▷

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THIS PICTURE: 'I wanted a big kitchen where friends can hang out and drink and chat while I'm cooking,' says Christian, who particularly likes the long, steel workbench because it feels a bit like a bar. Here, a hob, taps and black lacquered built-in cupboards by Boffi are teamed with Electrolux ovens and a bank of white built-in cupboards with sliding doors by Johannes (these are barely visible thanks to an absence of handles). The stainless-steel extractor and hanging strip light are by Will.



THIS PICTURE: 'Bathrooms are often dark,' says Christian, 'but because of my bathroom's glass wall, light pours into it via the kitchen.' At night, the area is lit by subtle spots which blend in with the ceiling. Since it's always on show, the bath had to be pretty special. 'We decided on a "Daro" bath from Duravit because of its pure and elegant shape,' he says. **OPPOSITE:** the bedroom is the only room in the flat that is totally private (allowing Christian to sleep through the day after all-night flights). The floor-to-ceiling door adds to the sense of privacy since it is flush with the wall and has no handle on the outside, so when closed, it's hard to tell where the bedroom is. This is probably the most spartan room in the house, furnished with nothing more than a bed designed by Johannes, with oak panelling adding warmth. Diffused light from a recess within the headboard provides enough light for reading, but is soft and relaxing.

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MOST LIGHT SOURCES ARE
HIDDEN AWAY – IN NICHEs
OR BEHIND PANELS – FOR
A SOFT, GLOWING EFFECT