





**Now and then** A fluorescent-light sculpture by Yuichi Higashionna, Joe Colombo's 1963 Eida chair and "Fragmentation" by Hedi Slimane illustrate the dialogue between vintage and new in Olivier Renaud-Clément's loft. Opposite: Renaud-Clément's collection includes Colombo's Aton lamp (on table) and molded plywood Sella chair, and a prototype chair by Achille Castiglioni.

# WHITE CASTLE

Photographs by **Nikolas Koenig**

IN A METICULOUS,  
MONOCHROMATIC LOFT,  
ICONIC DESIGN  
PIECES MINGLE SUAVELY  
WITH WORKS OF  
CONTEMPORARY ART.  
PILAR VILADAS TREADS  
CAREFULLY.







**Open house** A Mario Bellini sofa sits under the windows. The bedroom, opposite, opens into the living area; a neon piece by Michael Phelan hangs on the hallway wall.

# FOR THE INHABITANTS OF THE NEW YORK

art world, living in a spare white loft with just a few carefully curated things is not a new idea. But Olivier Renaud-Clément, a private art dealer, has taken the concept to a new frontier. His 1,500-square-foot Long Island City loft is white from floor to ceiling — “I look at pictures all day long,” he said by way of explanation — and it is so streamlined that there are no doors, save for the front door and one to the storage room. (Not only is there no bathroom door, but there’s no bathroom wall, either; a pane of glass and a sheer curtain are all that separates it from view, so when Renaud-Clément has a party, he advises female guests to use the restroom off the lobby downstairs.) The tiny kitchen has mirrored glass cabinets; make a cup of tea and you’re Windexing for 20 minutes.

But this immaculate space is also the perfect backdrop for its owner’s finely honed collection of Italian industrial design from the 1960s and 1970s, which includes furniture and lighting by legends like Joe Colombo, Cini Boeri, Mario Bellini, Gae Aulenti and Angelo Mangiarotti. Their particular brilliance at combining function and form while exploring the newest materials and technologies of their day resonates with Renaud-Clément, who views



**Mix well** The not-so-private bathroom, above left; the living area, above right. Opposite: in the kitchen, a Colombo lamp on a table by the contemporary designer Ineke Hans, and a chair made for Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1953.

these pieces as sculpture as well as furnishings. "The Italians made work that could fit anywhere," he said, "even in an old palazzo."

In this case, the palazzo is the former factory of the Eagle Electric Company, in a neighborhood that appealed to Renaud-Clément precisely because it hasn't yet been gentrified, a fate that long ago befell the Manhattan ZIP codes where he used to live. When he bought the space, the kitchen was at the one end of the loft that had windows, and the bedroom was completely enclosed. With the help of Steve Blatz, a New York architect, Renaud-Clément moved the kitchen to the other end of the space and opened up the bedroom. He left the wide hallway essentially empty: "It energizes me," he said.

And if the furnishings are deliberately spare — "I don't like accumulation," he declared — so is the art. Works by artists like Yuichi Higashionna, Not Vital, Hedi Slimane and Michael Phelan punctuate the glowing whiteness of the space.

Sometime soon Renaud-Clément, ever the editor, will auction off some of the pieces from his design collection, which currently totals about 450 things. But among those Italian classics he refuses to part with are two Ferraris from the 1970s and a 1967 Maserati Ghibli, which its owner calls "a mythical car." They are an extension of Renaud-Clément's passion for Italian design, but, like the chairs and lights in his loft, they're not meant to be museum pieces: he drives them around New York and takes them to Europe every summer. Extravagant, perhaps, but can you imagine someone who lives like this driving around Europe in a rental? ■

