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20 ODD QUESTIONS

THOMAS JUUL-HANSEN

The architect behind graceful New York restaurant interiors—and one of the most expensive apartment buildings ever—loves Danish design, and wishes more people had fewer, better things

SET TO OPEN IN 2014, One57 will be Manhattan's tallest residential building, at 1,004 feet, and quite possibly its most expensive, averaging \$6,000 per square foot. Extell, the property's developer, selected Danish interior designer Thomas Juul-Hansen to create the luxe floor plans and finishes even before hiring the building's architect. One57's lucky residents will have Mr. Juul-Hansen to thank for details like hand-carved Italian marble bathtubs built for two and Macassar ebony wood kitchen cabinets. Mr. Juul-Hansen, who holds a master's in architecture from Harvard University, was a senior designer at Richard Meier and Partners before opening his own firm in 2003. His clients include jeweler David Yurman, hip-hop impresario Damon Dash and restaurateur Jean-Georges Vongerichten. When he's not working, Mr. Juul-Hansen turns off his BlackBerry and relaxes in his airy TriBeCa loft or Delaware River country home with his wife, architect Judy Wenfei Lee, and their 6-year-old daughter, Jasmin.

Almost everything I buy for my homes is vintage. Istdibs.com is an incredible resource. I also roam vintage stores. I found my dining table at Nest in Narrowsburg, N.Y. It's a 10-foot-long, 4-foot-wide 1950s table from Denmark.

My personal style is basic. My wife always says if you have a fantastic bag or shoes, everything else should be toned down. If you have a nice suit, you don't need a nice tie. All my suits are Paul Smith. They fit me well, with a European cut, and the fabrics are amazing.

If money were no object, I'd collect Gio Ponti and Carlo Mollino furniture.

I'd like to get my hands on a couple of vintage Finn Juhl Chieftain chairs, made for the American Embassy in 1949. He only made about 50 of them, and there are very few of the originals around. They now cost about \$100,000.

My biggest splurge is the house I built upstate—a four-bedroom house, with a huge deck and a pool. It's very crisp, not fussy at all. It's the anti-Hampton.

For inexpensive treasures, I appreciate IKEA. When you have a 6-year-old, unless you're very wealthy, this is where you buy her furniture. For my daughter's playroom, I bought two paper lamps.

My most prized possessions are two Poul Kjaerholm PK 25 chairs, which the designer made for his final exam project [in 1951]. It's extraordinary and still in production, a stainless-steel frame with woven hemp rope. Expensive as hell.

The way I think about material possessions is probably Danish and is very much about permanence. I'm not a fan of con-

stantly upgrading. My father is 95, and he taught me the Depression-era way of thinking: I'd rather have just two great chairs than a room full of cheap things that aren't important to me. It's the 1940s Danish idea of "total design." Handles, lighting fixtures, chairs—everything is designed to work together.

My dream client, living or dead, is Steve Jobs. He had a great appreciation for art, and I think he was about waiting to make something that was right, and delaying things if necessary.

The best advice I've ever received was from a teacher at Harvard who taught me to multitask, to always have two or three things so you're continually rotating. Every 15 minutes, you ask yourself, "Have I made progress?" If not, rotate and come back to it later. This allows me to be very efficient.

No home is complete without a great dining table. I read a study that said if you have dinner with your children every night, they're 25% more likely to be successful at school. The dining table is critical.

For home fragrance, we use Diptyque's Jasmin [candle], the same name as my daughter.

We don't have a TV. If my daughter wants to watch a movie, it's on the iPad.

In my kitchen I must have a wine fridge. Always. The one I have in New York City is cheap, and the one upstate is Miele, and they're both great.

The most overrated design trend is the use of new man-made materials: resins, plastics, fibers, polymers. The way they're typically executed, with curves



and folds, it doesn't carry any longevity. No one ever says, "This oak is so 2006" but with some of the new design materials, you might say, "This is so dot-com."

If I had one day to redesign a living room, I would paint everything white and then get rid of as much as possible.

I purge my things every three months. I give my clothes to the Salvation Army.

To achieve the best lighting, I turn on five or six table lamps. It's a very low, sexy light and very peaceful. I recommend keeping lighting at a lower focal point. It can change things dramatically.

I wish people would better appreciate quality furniture. In Denmark, even in a farmer's home, odds are you'll find an Arne Jacobsen chair or a Bang & Olufsen TV. The idea is you save up for years to get something and then you hold on to it and pass it along. It doesn't mean that you're elitist or rich, it means you have an appreciation. I see people here who drive very fancy cars and have crummy homes. I find it very curious.

COOL CUSTOMER Clockwise from top: Thomas Juul-Hansen; his maul; Miele wine fridge; his country home on the Delaware River; Finn Juhl's Chieftain Chair; Jean-Georges restaurant; IKEA Väte lamp; Mr. Juul-Hansen's living room; Diptyque candle; Poul Kjaerholm's PK 25 chair.

My proudest contribution to our country house is the six-foot wide, four-foot tall fireplace. My parents lived in a very simple Arne Jacobsen-designed house with a great fireplace. It inspired me to build the one I have now. Fire is the most peaceful thing, and the scent is amazing.

I teach my daughter that objects are just stuff, and they can come and go. But I know my clients have a lot of stuff, so I make sure they have storage for all of it. I build a lot of closets. Then everything's in its space and you can breathe.

On my desk, I just need my computer, a roll of tracing paper and that's it. No photographs, no knickknacks.

When I come home from work, I put away the BlackBerry. I find it very bad for my family to work at home. If you must have a home office, it should be concealed.

To relax I play tennis and ski. I also chop wood with my new favorite toy, a 10-pound maul, a kind of hybrid axe-sledgehammer. It's the strangest thing, but chopping wood completely clears your mind. Also, good wine helps.

—Edited from an interview by Jackie Cooperman

Photographs by Thomas Loof for The Wall Street Journal; Finn Juhl's Chieftain Chair (Candice)