

Annabelle Selldorf | Architects' Own Lines

## The Right Proportions

Her New Furniture Collection Serves Up Big Glamour on a More Personal Scale

By Stephen Drucker



The dining table can be customized with materials like glass and darkened bronze.



Common to each bedside table is a walnut drawer mounted in brass, bronze or steel.



Architect Annabelle Selldorf's line of furnishings, Vica, includes the petite Cube chair.

LIKE THE FAMILY CAR AND portions of french fries, furniture just keeps getting bigger and bigger, to the point that reasonably scaled pieces can be hard to find. The architect Annabelle Selldorf has decided to do something about it. The 23 pieces in her new Vica line are, she says, “a

bit of a countermovement.” Let other people disappear into their down cushions; she would like to remind us that well-designed furniture has a civilizing influence.

“There’s this mistaken notion that Americans are bigger than Europeans, so we need bigger furniture. It’s just not

true,” says Selldorf, who was born in Germany. “There’s also a notion that if a room has 10-foot ceilings, the furniture must be scaled up. Overscale. That’s not necessarily true either. What works, anywhere, for anybody, is furniture that is proportional and elegant.”

Selldorf grew up in Co-

logne, over the original Vica furniture factory founded by her grandmother. For her, the daughter of architect Herbert Selldorf (who still practices in Germany), furniture has been a family matter since the crib. “Nowadays you can find abstract minimalist designs, al-

*continued on page 130*



Designed to align with the back of the sofa, the console table is in walnut and bronze.

“What works, anywhere, for anybody, is furniture that is proportional and elegant,” says Annabelle Selldorf.



A 1960s chair inspired the Selldorf sofa, which “can be casual or formal.” The architect (below) named the line for her grandmother.



Clients are invited to choose their own fabric for the upholstered pieces, such as the bed.



*continued from page 128*  
most all of which are Italian,” she says. “At the other end of the spectrum you have pieces that come out of a strong tradition, like George Smith. I’m trying to fill a different need, somewhere in between.”

The Selldorf sofa, which she pictures ideally in cotton velvet, has a sensibility nicely matched to the current mid-

century-modern madness. “It’s modeled after a chair from the ’60s that I own,” Selldorf says. “It’s not meant to be exciting. But it is very elegant and well proportioned. There’s a degree of formality about it that I approve of.”

The Herbert chair, designed by her father 40 years ago, may well be the perfect classic salon chair, especially in the

aubergine leather she favors. It’s modern, but it’s not. It’s as comfortable as the most elephantine club chair, yet no proportion is more than 29 inches. “There’s a great deal of knowledge behind it,” Selldorf explains. “It has certain dimensional and technical qualities. It’s relatively firm. The rake of the back is not overly steep. The arms are in just the

Blackened-hardwood legs support the Simple chair, available with a matching ottoman.



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The glass-topped coffee table comes in steel, bronze or brass with a painted glass shelf.

right place.” And those biceps are not overly pumped.

What should be big is big. Selldorf’s tables, meant as gathering places as well as dining venues, are rather large but amazingly delicate and luxurious. Her six-foot-long Marble console is available in a particularly ravishing stone called Fior di Pesco Apuano, swirling with pinks, grays and

white—“On any given slab you have enormous life, like a Tiepolo ceiling.”

Perhaps the most endearing item, though, is a faceted metal light fixture, originally designed for Selldorf’s renovation of the Neue Galerie building in Manhattan. “It’s timeless and a little primitive,” she says. “A bare bulb is a fine thing.” Just the right size, too. □