

A DAY IN THE

# 90s

*It's never too early to start revisiting raves, minimalism, and online stock trading.*



First, throw everything away: After all, the early nineties are when the minimalist lifestyle reigned supreme. Then, paint the walls **Benjamin Moore Decorator's White** in matte (Janovic Plaza; 212-349-0001)—it's a punishingly stark white. Go to the Two Jakes vintage-office-furniture store and pick up two **Aeron chairs** (718-782-7780) or a few **Philippe Starck Costes chairs**, for that height-of-the-Internet-gold-rush look. Complete it by getting a vintage orange iMac on eBay and turning it into a fishtank. Voilà! Your apartment is furnished. Now begin a strict fitness regime. Get a pair of **Rollerblades** at Paragon (212-255-8036), wear them over Donna Karan leggings, and start lapping Central Park at 7am. When you get back, open an account with Charles Schwab. After a few NASDAQ trades, put your work look together with a razor-sharp **black vintage Helmut Lang suit** (try Tokyo Joe; 212-473-0724), and a black nylon **Prada backpack** (212-334-8888) for that sporty tech look. Then ask Kevin Lee at Kenneth Salon (212-752-1800) to layer your hair and blow it stick-straight, just like **Rachel Green** in the first season of *Friends*. Refuel with a **martini** and the seafood salad at Gotham Bar & Grill (212-620-4020), still incredibly popular with the power-lunch crowd. For dinner, remind yourself that Japanese cuisine used to be exotic by ordering the black cod miso at Nobu Next Door. It's the go-go nineties, so don't go to bed yet! Buy a grande espresso at the **Starbucks** on Astor Place before taking a cab out to Dumbo for the rave at **Lunatarium** (lunatarium.com), which really starts to crank around 2 a.m.

When you get back, gorge on **SnackWells' Fat Free Devil's Food Cakes** while watching the newly released **Seinfeld: Seasons 5 and 6**. Then blast **Nirvana's Sliver: The Best of the Box**, and light a candle for Kurt.



**WHITE NOW**  
Belmont Freeman in his Upper West Side penthouse.

LIVING THE LIFE

## The Minimalist

IN 1991, BELMONT FREEMAN turned 40 and started paring down his life. He ended a long-term relationship, sold off most of his books and art, and cleaned out his closets. His one addition—and it was major—was a Riverside Drive penthouse that he gut-renovated in 2000 as a minimalist mission statement for his architectural practice. “Life can be better with less,” says Freeman, who shaves his head to avoid dealing with hair upkeep. “Living this way makes me feel clean.”

Freeman limited himself to four building materials—white plaster walls, white lacquered-wood cabinetry, stainless steel, and blue-gray terrazzo floors (no rugs). The few furnishings are strictly black, gray, or light wood. Of the one small sofa, a George Nelson daybed, he says: “I can only sit in one place at a time.”

His favorite appliances are appropriately invisible: The Miele G843 dishwasher has controls on the inside and is fronted with the same white Formica as the kitchen cabinets; likewise the Sub-Zero 700 Series. “People walk into my kitchen and have no idea where the refrigerator is,” he says. Decoration is limited to a \$20 mud cloth from Mali and a Jim Dine lithograph. He has other things in storage, but, he says, “I don’t need to display every book I’ve read to prove my credentials as a literate human being.”

Needless to say, Freeman isn’t exactly stoking the economy; mostly he buys food. His few CDs—hidden in a built-in drawer—are minimalists Philip Glass, Steve Reich, and La Monte Young. His wardrobe comes almost entirely from Barneys New York, and consists of Yohji Yamamoto, Issey Miyake, and especially Jil Sander, whose iconic techno suit he cherishes. He tries not to look at postmodernist “atrocities” like Philip Johnson’s AT&T Building.

Living in a cluttered world takes discipline for someone who values, above all, open space. Freeman opens mail the day it arrives, answers correspondence immediately to avoid “psychological clutter,” and limits the duration of visits to his sister’s “filled-with-things” house. “The world would be a much better place if people came to their senses and realized they don’t need to live such acquisitive lives,” he explains.

R.C.

WHAT'S HOT NOW

### Visionaire, Issue 1

Unapologetically expensive (the charter subscription was \$60), intermittently published, and awash in concept, the ultra-artsy *Visionaire* called itself “a couture version of a magazine” and treated fashion and style with serious reverence. Each edition was assigned a theme (the Bible, black, erotica) and overseen by a “curator” (Tom Ford, Karl Lagerfeld) who mustered the images. By limiting its printing to under 1,000 copies and working with top artists, photographers, and illustrators, *Visionaire* made itself an object of desire. *Visionaire* is now up to issue 47, and some back issues are available through its office here (212-274-8959), but issues one (April 1991) through four are highly prized and sometimes available on that most nineties of marketplaces, eBay.



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