

# LIVING ART

ANDREW EGAN, FOUNDER OF NEW YORK DESIGN AGENCY COOLGRAYSEVEN, BRINGS CREATIVE FLAIR AND COLOUR TO HIS GREENWICH VILLAGE APARTMENT AND WORKSPACE

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Andrew Egan pictured in his "creative space", which is ordered and organised yet multifunctional (it's been used for concerts, art shows and design work). The easel, a flea market find that has travelled with Andrew since he used it for projects during university, often displays artwork. **(Opposite page)** "I love the scale and how innocent it is," Andrew says of the photograph *Existence no. 17*, by close friend Martyn Thompson, that hangs in his bedroom. The black candles, which line the bureau, reveal Andrew's deft hand in using repetition to display his collections. →



**(Opposite page)** The ex-CoolGraySeven office is now Andrew's studio. A red canvas he's working on is placed between a portrait by Rainer Andreesen and a large red painting he loves for its depth. "The more you become in tune with a work of art, the more you start seeing different layers in it."  
**(Right)** The modern living room furniture provides a clean slate for bold accents, including two black-and-white horse images taken by friend Donna DeMari. The oil painting *Black Cross* is part of Andrew's series based on a Roman tile floor. **(Below right)** An untitled "graphic yet soft" flower painting by friend Andrea Byrne was a family gift. In front, is a photo of water by Quentin Bacon.



"I'm always having arguments with people about whether grey's a colour," says Andrew Egan, creative director and founder of the Manhattan-based design agency CoolGraySeven. "I think it's absolutely a colour – I see so much emotion in it, and at an early age I became somewhat obsessed by it."

Grey is a core element of Andrew's agency, whose work ranges from designing Times Square billboards for fashion companies like Dana Buchman to handcrafting invitations for the luxury lingerie company Natori, and handling all of the design work for Donna Karan's philanthropic organisation, Urban Zen. They were even involved in a large fundraising event with the Dalai Lama. "If the client understands our aesthetic, which is super-simple and ordered but with really beautiful detailing, and we find the work interesting, then we'll take on the project," explains Andrew.

Eight years ago, after working in London as a creative director for *Cosmopolitan* and *Men's Health* magazines and starting the Egan Media design group, Andrew decided to relocate to Manhattan. It was an idea that occurred to him unexpectedly. "I was on a run in Brooklyn for the New York City Marathon and I looked across the river at the skyline and instantly decided I had to live there."

Lured by the iconic architecture, his first three apartments in the city were classic New York lofts with high ceilings, open floor plans and ample space. But, Andrew insists, his current home is "the most beautiful apartment I've ever seen". It's located in a →





five-storey brownstone in Greenwich Village, on one of the city's most desirable blocks. So desirable, in fact, that when friends living on the top floor told him the second-floor, one-bedroom apartment was about to become available, Andrew gathered his references and bank statements, stood on the front steps and waited for the landlady. "Before I even walked in, I said, 'I'll take it.' I can be slightly impulsive like that," he admits.

In an effort to balance the inherent elegance of the refined prewar space, Andrew has spent the three years he's lived here gradually mixing in modern elements, one piece at a time. "For the first six months, all I had was a table, two chairs and a bed," he recalls. And the 12-inch laptop he used to launch CoolGraySeven out of a small front room. Eventually, though, the space started to evolve.

The walls were painted white and the floor-to-ceiling shelving unit in the bedroom changed from black to grey. Then Andrew slowly started adding considered objects, such as vintage red-and-white surveyor poles he found while shopping in Soho, an Arteluce lamp from an antique store in Palm Springs, paintings – including many of his own – and photography. "The starting point for me, whether in design or in life, is always black and white," he says. Add in the highlight colour of red and that's the palette that Andrew applies to everything, from his apartment decor to his wardrobe.

After working out of Andrew's home for a year and expanding from two to four employees, CoolGraySeven moved into its →

**(This page)** The bookshelf in the bedroom is functional and expressive, a showcase for Andrew's collection of cricket numbers picked up in Sydney years ago and crosses from a church shop in London. "That goes back to the Catholic thing!" says Andrew, referring to his years in parochial school. A self-portrait by friend and painter Rainer Andreesen lightly leans against a woodblock piece – which consists of reconstructed parts of old signs – by Guy Matthews. **(Opposite page)** The Melbourne tram reel, which contrasts nicely in colour and texture with the bed linen, has previously been displayed on two different walls in Andrew's living room. "I like the feeling that things are always evolving," he says.



Andrew (**left**) likes to emotionally connect with his clients, which often leads to evocative design concepts. (**Below**) Among samples of his work from fashion campaigns for Ellen Tracy and Natori sits a range of Pantone 'Cool Gray' colour chips – including no. 7, which inspired the company name. (**Opposite page, top**) In CoolGraySeven's office, near Andrew's home, the bold red painting *Seeing Red* by Jessica Langton adds drama and anchors a conversation corner. A speed-limit sign, found at a local flea market, was an unexpected starting point for a client's visual identity. (**Opposite page, bottom**) The open and creatively inspiring office area is exactly what Andrew "always thought a workspace should look like".



own space. "I literally needed everyone out of my house," laughs Andrew. Located just a few blocks north of the apartment, his office is a massive 2000-square-foot loft space that instantly communicates his interest in being organised yet flexible.

"The layout of the office helps us to be very versatile," he says. There's one 40-foot white desk that extends almost the entire length of the space, and two large wooden work tables from ABC Carpet & Home that can be pushed together to form one large square for conceptualising a new project, split apart into two tables for more intimate meetings, or even lined up end to end for working through the layout of a book. And at the close of each day, the staff store away their papers in designated cupboards and filing cabinets in an effort to keep the space "clean and clear".

"We work in an untraditional fashion," Andrew says, referring to how the ultra-modern design firm conceptualises all new design projects on paper before ever going near a computer. With the company settled into its own place – which, after hours, often transforms into a concert area for musically inclined friends – the apartment has truly become Andrew's creative sanctuary. The home office has turned into his painting studio and he uses the living room, with its acoustically primed parquet wood floors and tall glass windows, to practise the cello. "It's so nice that I can come home at night and be indulgent in that way."

To find out more about CoolGraySeven, visit [www.coolgrayseven.com](http://www.coolgrayseven.com). ❖

