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HIGH DEFINITION

An urban condominium gets a dynamic new look that suits its lively Back Bay neighborhood and inspires as much admiration as its spectacular city views.



Stephen Mueller's buoyant watercolors, from Boston's Obelisk Gallery, hang by the living room's new fireplace. ABOVE: The entry sports a rosewood-topped buffet by Holly Hunt, sleek sconces by Jonathan Browning and a colorful painting by Tristan Gavignon.



No one would argue that the potential was anything less than great. The newly constructed Back Bay condominium had everything going for it. Perched on the topmost floor, it had cinematic views. The busy surrounding neighborhood boasted shops and galleries enough to keep anyone entertained for days on end. And talk about an enhance-your-lifestyle feature: a private elevator ushered the owners directly into their unit like a caring mother hen.

Still, there was one rather obvious downside. A recipe of standard finishes, bland beige walls (no mocha, not even a hint of cafe au lait), dark cabinetry and little detailing had left the urban nest with a lackluster personality, recall interior designers Andrew Terrat and Dee Elms of Boston-based Terrat Elms Interior Design.

The design duo's challenge was to wake the place out of its slumber. The owners had left behind a handsome traditional home and, although they didn't want a repeat of the same, they envisioned a residence that reflected their good taste—something a dash more contemporary, for sure, but brimming with character nevertheless.

So Terrat and Elms did what the best designers do: they listened carefully and then they sprang into action, shaking up the rectangular two-bedroom condominium from end to end. The heart of the home—the open-plan kitchen/dining/living area—rocketed from quiet to stunning with the addition

Dramatic Linea chandeliers by Boyd Light illuminate the open living-room area where seating, including a leather-covered accent chair by Holly Hunt, surrounds a versatile Madam X cocktail table. The sofa is covered in a taupe Larsen fabric that wears as beautifully as it looks.



In an intimate corner, oversize horizontal stripes on Bauen chairs play to a graphic cowhide leather Alhambra rug by Kyle Bunting. FACING PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM: The kitchen's coral-colored tiled backsplash is in keeping with the home's concise palette. The designers cleverly chose a polished steel base for an Indian marble sculpture in the dining area.



of a classic coffered ceiling meticulously crafted by Herrick & White Architectural Woodworkers from Cumberland, Rhode Island. And where a ho-hum wall had formerly stood its ground, the designers introduced a grand focal point: a floor-to-ceiling hearth clad in dreamy Athens Silver Cream travertine from Ann Sacks. They thoughtfully elevated the level of the fireplace to ensure the heart-warming flames remain visible above the cocktail table, even when the owners sink into their John Mark sofa at the end of the day.

Such meticulous scheming is obvious throughout. Take the dual chandeliers that float, not over the dining table—far too predictable—but above the main living area as visual anchors. And what about the lacquered cabinetry flanking the fireplace? The sleek shelves afford storage and provide room for a bar, which is a much-appreciated boon for entertaining. But Terrat and Elms pushed the custom unit even further by giving it a bronze mirrored lining. The lush materials—stone, lacquered wood, mirror—are worthy complements to the serene palette and posh fabrics of the room, where walls are swathed in pale gray Phillip Jeffries linen, and twin barrel chairs that swivel to face the windows and catch the scenery wear mohair angora.

The clean, consistent color scheme introduces a calming air of continuity. Escape to the quiet reading corner and claim one of the Bauen chairs by Ironies and it might feel as if you're in your own private world, but the stylish tone doesn't miss a beat. The chairs' oversize stripes and nailhead trim—not to mention the round ottoman with its reflective metal band or the custom laser-cut cowhide rug—give the tranquil spot equal panache. "We like to imagine the owners sitting here enjoying a quiet glass of wine," says Terrat.

The kitchen upholds its end, too. None of that all-too-usual vibe. In this slick home, the charming chef's station adds to the overall sophistication. Under new pale-lacquered cabinetry that climbs to the ceiling, the cache of original dark units strikes a polite and pleasing contrast. The designers plugged in a backsplash of reflective glass for additional sparkle but wisely guarded the cooktop with an easy-to-clean marble runway. The Eric bar stools convening along the counter wear a graphic taupe and blue Cowtan & Tout fabric that speaks as readily to pre-theater cocktails as it does to coffee and the Sunday morning papers.

The furnishings and layers of detail aren't the only stars in this home, though. There's also a bounty of handsome art. Artist Jon Imber's spirited abstract *Blossom*, which claims a wall alongside the dining table (the table is one of the few pieces the owners saved from their old house), introduces a swirl of movement and color. "We were very excited when we brought in Imber's painting. It was transformational to this space," recalls Elms. And Tristan Govignon's oil painting *Destiny* above a Holly Hunt buffet is among the first items visitors spy when the elevator doors part. The painting is so engaging, in fact, hardly a soul remembers how dismaying it was for guests to look directly into the laundry room before the designers created the paneled wall that holds it.

As one might expect, Terrat and Elms keep the momentum



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In the master bedroom, built-ins fabricated by Herrick & White Architectural Woodworkers showcase the custom bed and create a home for a collection of pottery. The upholstered chair and table along the window are by Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams. RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM: Bentley sconces and luxe upholstery up the glamour. Custom vanities offer ample master bath storage.



going in the master bedroom, too. A utilitarian door to a fire escape is concealed today behind lush Sandra Jordan smoky blue Prima Alpaca draperies—an ingenious solution that seems to double the window's size. The bed nestles against an upholstered wall tucked between custom lacquered wood built-ins. More cocoon than mere sleeping quarters, the room is designed to be a haven treating all the senses.

That's precisely the route the master bath takes as well. The designers fashioned custom vanities and swept in a host of Ann Sacks Calacatta stone to freshen and glamorize the space. With the petite powder room, however, they took a less dramatic approach, painting the existing vanity a sultry blue and swathing

the walls in glass tile. Two small maneuvers, you might think, but clever game changers nonetheless. "Whenever we can," says Elms, "we like to use what's there."

Clearly, the project is a huge success. The interior is as swanky now as the address. And there's another underlying element that seals the deal: the haute fabrics and furnishings may appear to fall in the fragile category, but they're all immensely livable. The owners, and their dog, can come and go without worry, the designers insist. How perfect is that? Terrat and Elms have devised a home that's gorgeous and—we can almost hear the sighs of contentment—comfortable. •

RESOURCES For more information about this home, see page 132.

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