

New England Home

CELEBRATING FINE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

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HIGH MARKS

Charged with turning a unit in a Boston high-rise into a space that suits a pair of college students as well as their visiting parents, two South End designers pass with flying colors. TEXT BY PAULA M. BODAH • PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG PREMUR • INTERIOR DESIGN: ANDREW TERRAT AND DEE ELMS, TERRAT ELMS INTERIOR DESIGN • BUILDER: GREG NICOLAI, G.L. NICOLAI & COMPANY • PRODUCED BY KYLE HOEPNER



The designers used pale walls to let the view take center stage, then grounded the living room with a graphic rug and comfortable furniture in earthy colors.

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emember how stressful dorm life could be? Oh, it had its upsides, like a built-in social network that could turn any mundane weeknight into an occasion for a party. But

sharing close quarters with a bunch of other college students could also be distracting. Just think of the extra studying you might have squeezed in if you'd had a place to escape to now and then.

Two lucky young men—cousins who came from Southeast Asia to study at Boston-area colleges—have just that. When they need a place for uninterrupted study (or to entertain a few friends without the whole dorm showing up) they can get away to their very own pied-à-terre, a two-bedroom condominium in the Clarendon, the elegant new brick-and-glass-faced high-rise in Boston's Back Bay.

The smart and practical parents of one of the boys had more than just their son and nephew in mind when they bought the unit with its stunning views of the Boston skyline. They also envisioned comfortable accommodations for themselves and other relatives visiting the young men. Posters and secondhand furniture, those staples of dorm decor, wouldn't do, of course. The couple liked the way Andrew Terrat and Dee Elms had done up the Clarendon's model unit, so they asked the design partners to work some magic on their seventeenth-floor space. The designers were happy for the opportunity. "The Clarendon is so amazing," Elms says. "It's a fantastic new building. Once you walk in the doors the beauty starts with the gorgeous lobby. The units are great, and they have wonderful views."

Terrat and Elms kept several goals in mind as they worked on the design plan. The unit should have a grown-up, sophisticated appeal for the parents and an informal, casual element for the young men. Visiting relatives would want comfort, even a bit of luxury, while the students would need work areas to spread out textbooks and laptops. And given the condo's compact size of about 1,400 square feet, everyone would appreciate a





New paneling painted a warm gold gives the small foyer dramatic impact. Facing page top: Touches of bright color in art and accessories pop against the neutral walls and furniture. Facing page bottom: A walnut surround gives the TV a fireplace-like feel.



scheme providing the look and feel of a larger place.

Conflicting missions? Perhaps, but Terrat and Elms brought them all together with effortless elegance.

The pocket-size foyer makes a big impression, introducing the blend of drama and casual ease that characterizes the apartment. "It's not an expansive foyer at all," Elms admits, "so we wanted to create a couple of 'moments' to draw your eye, playing with the dimensions of the space so it feels a little larger."

Across from the front door, a sleek chrome-legged console and a round mirror elongate the space. To the left the designers applied paneling to a blank wall, then painted it a warm golden hue and hung a colorful piece by South Boston artist Lázaro Montano. "When there was no paneling, there was no great moment in the foyer," Elms says. "We knew it would make a great art wall, and it makes the space look bigger."

In the open living area the designers beefed up the baseboard molding and added a simple crown molding for a polished look. Pale walls and white light fixtures give the space a lofty feel and draw attention to the dramatic views of the city, while a graphic rug and furniture in deep tones and a variety of textures keep things grounded. Again, elegance and comfort coexist in the sectional sofa, a mod-

Pale walls give the space a lofty feel and draw attention to the dramatic views.



ern-lined piece that wears a woven fabric of black and gray shot through with silver threads. Brighter color comes into play in the plump toss pillows that sprinkle the furniture with paprika, cinnamon and other spicy hues. Armchairs outfitted in plush charcoal-gray velour swivel to face the sofa and the views or the TV. Televisions have a way of interfering with a designer's carefully conceived decor, but Terrat and Elms struck on a solution that's as beautiful as it is brilliant, setting the square Bang & Olufsen TV in a walnut surround with upper and lower ledges that mimic the mantel and hearth of a fireplace. (Both young residents are avid gamers, so this

A built-in banquette, cantilevered off the window sill, adds seating for dining. Facing page top: The countertop's raised slab was added for more surface space and informal dining. Facing page bottom: The dining-area light fixture hangs from a medallion the designers created.



particular amenity gets a lot of use.)

The dining area had the potential to float a bit uncomfortably in its corner until the designers added a banquette, building it into the window to provide seating without taking up too much space. "It's cantilevered off the windowsill," Elms explains. "We tried to take advantage of the space as much as possible." A durable fabric in a pungent red that echoes the pillows in the living room injects a cheery note.

In another wise use of space, Terrat and Elms added an elevated bar to the kitchen peninsula for more surface area and to create a second, more casual dining spot.

Color plays a larger role in the bedrooms, where the designers installed painted paneling on the walls behind the beds—a rich cognac color in the master bedroom and a serene teal blue in the guest room. There, twin beds with tall upholstered headboards sit on a colorful striped rug. The master bedroom's king-size bed has a headboard covered in cream-colored linen with nailhead trim, and the bedding pulls it all together with its cognac-on-cream color scheme.

Built-in desks in each bedroom fit into the large windows. "The windows have nice solid, deep windowsills, so we cantilevered the desks here, as we did with the dining banquette," Elms explains. "We left enough space so that you can still open the windows."

The only window treatments in the unit are

The unit has both grown-up, sophisticated appeal and informal, casual elements.

the motorized shades. "Our client felt that these young guys wouldn't really appreciate curtains," Elms says with a laugh. "Plus, this works with the clean, contemporary look we were going for."

Given the assignment of creating a space equally well suited for college students and their parents, it's clear that the designers have earned top marks. •

Resources For more information about this home, see page 142.





Bedrooms get a warm touch from paneling painted in rich shades. Facing page top: A desk built into the bedroom window affords study space. Facing page bottom: Pieces of art, like this sleek sculpture, lend interest but never clutter.

