



Rooms with a View

A couple finds the perfect empty nest above the trees in a Galleria area high-rise

Text by Cathy Gordon | Photos by Janet Lenzen Photography | Interior Design: Ginger Barber | Architect: Chris Lewis | Builder: Steven B. Goodman



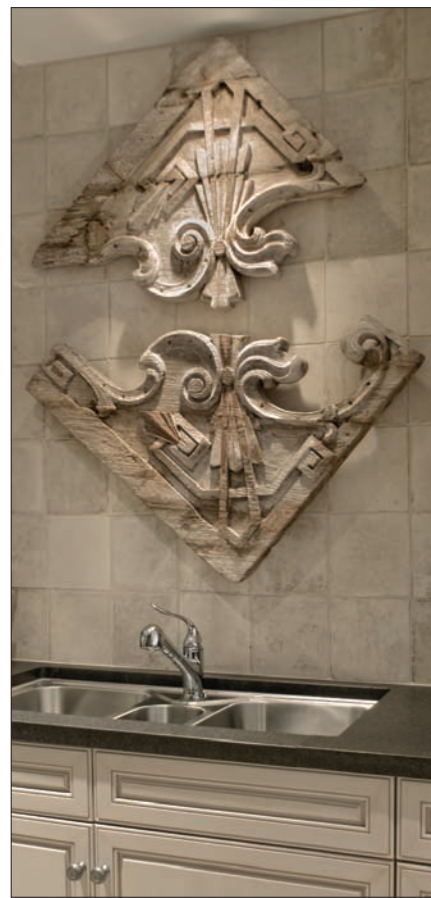
With three grown children pursuing new chapters in their lives, this Houston couple was ready to embrace new adventure, too. They had raised their family in a ranch-style house in Meyerland but were ready for new living quarters. The hunt was on.

Houston's Memorial area was enticing. Perhaps they would build on a large lot with trees? But the wife had other ideas upon hearing about the new upscale Montebello luxury high-rise, developed by Interfin in Uptown Park.

PREVIOUS PAGES: A mix of furniture in beautiful neutrals makes up the living room with fantastic views overlooking portions of the city.

THESE PAGES: A vintage door from Annette Schatte Antiques serves as gateway to the pantry in the kitchen. | A vintage architectural piece in wood from the Round Top Antiques Fair adds interest in the kitchen against a backsplash of antique tiles from Chateau Domingue. The homeowners love their brushed, honed granite countertops.

| A charming sofa once belonging to the homeowner's mother is a cherished piece in the music room, slipcovered for a fresh look. Similarly, the chair was reupholstered for a new, clean look. | The homeowners wanted an oversized dining room to accommodate family and friends. The table, an Italian reproduction, was disassembled at move-in time so it could fit in the elevator. The table and chairs are from Brian Stringer Antiques, and the chandelier is from Kay O'Toole Antiques, both of Houston. | A settee found at the Round Top Antique Fair anchors the end of the dining room. Pedestals from Carl Moore Antiques.





"It was very important to my husband that we have a lot of trees," recalls the homeowner. "And we got very close to doing the Memorial thing, but I kind of put the brakes on. He was traveling a lot and I realized I didn't want to be in some big house by myself. Living here he can have all the trees he wants and we don't have to take care of a single one of them."

Indeed, views from the couple's high-rise encompass a stunning panoramic blanket of trees, compliments of the historic Tanglewood subdivision. "We're blown away by the views!" the wife exclaims. "And the lifestyle is exactly what we wanted. We love it. I just can't say enough good things about how it all came together."

The couple bought two condominium units, combining them for a

total of 5,000 square feet. Because they purchased pre-construction, they were able to customize to their tastes. And they knew exactly who to go to for interior design.

"Ginger Barber is simply amazing," says the homeowner who contacted the designer after seeing her work in a magazine. "My husband totally supported me in starting with a blank slate. We didn't bring a lot of things over from the Meyerland house. So believe me, I needed somebody who could guide me through the process and give me the new look that I wanted."

The space is a reflection of that homeowner-designer relationship. And this homeowner was very hands on.

"I'm really sensitive to the client's lifestyle. They wanted a little more slick but still traditional, livable and time-





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less look,” Barber explains. “So that’s what we did with a few antiques and key pieces anchoring the spaces. And we used some of her sentimental pieces, a few of her mother’s furnishings, and gave them a whole new look through slipcovering. The homeowners were great to work with.”

The result is subtle elegance born from a palette of neutral tones and interesting textures. Barber and the homeowner went on buying trips in Dallas and Houston, finding the perfect pieces to fit each room. “So much fun that I didn’t want it to end,” says the wife. “When we were done and everything was in its place it was like, what’s next? ‘You mean I can’t go out and buy more stuff?’ That was the hardest part. Every day I walk in here and can’t believe I live in such a beautiful place.”

There is a lot to love, starting with the captivating views that draw visitors in, even from the front foyer. The eye follows to a bank of windows in the condominium’s music room/living room/ dining room. This visual feast is seen from the master bedroom suite as well. “We don’t even draw the shades down at night because we love the night lights of the city and how calming it is to sleep with that view,” the homeowner says.



THESE PAGES: A cozy sitting area in the breakfast room is a favorite spot for playing Mah-jongg or just relaxing with a good book. The mirror is from The Gathering Galleries in Dallas; the ottoman from Twenty-Six Twenty in Houston. | Flickers of elegance in the dining room with candlelight playing against a mirror found at The Gray Door in Houston. | A striking cabinet in rich wood from Made in France provides storage for the television in the media room. Old plow sleds once used to churn up dirt are recycled as artistic elements here. | The media room is the most used space in the high-rise with a comfortable sectional for television viewing. | Antique doors from Chateau Domingue are not only beautiful, but also extremely functional in the wife’s study, hiding the fax machine, file drawers and other office necessities. Shelves are stocked with wonderful sentimental objects and books that the homeowner has collected throughout the years.

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Two terraces—one off the music room and the other adjoining the husband's office off the master bedroom—let the outdoors in.

She appreciates that Barber incorporated many of her mother's pieces into the mix. For example, a sofa gets a fresh slipcovered look in the music room. Other family heirlooms look at home here too, amidst antiques and other treasured finds.

Getting used to high-rise living didn't take long. The couple loves it for the low maintenance lifestyle and easy access to city amenities. The anticipation of watching it come together was half the fun. The development company threw periodic hard-hat parties, taking residents up in service elevators to get a glimpse of what was in store.

"I was awe-struck," the wife says. "Nothing was in place, no windows, no

clue of how it was all going to come together. But there it was.... this amazing view. It was so much fun imagining what the rooms would look like and how they would take in that view."

Very few glitches occurred until time to get certain pieces from ground floor to their lofty destination. A large pine cupboard that takes up an entire wall in the breakfast sitting area has added another story to its vintage history. It had to be disassembled in all manner of ways to accommodate the elevator and clear passage around the corner once it found its way to the couple's floor.

A beautiful Italian reproduction dining table of considerable length was also disassembled for the trip up, with barely an inch to spare on the elevator. "I wanted a large dining room and a big table to accommodate family and guests," the

wife explains. "But getting it up here was the trick. They had to take the legs off. We had barely enough clearance to get it up here, it was so tight. My joke was: 'This building is going to have a very nice picnic table outside.'"

That table serves as the perfect gathering spot for dinner parties and holidays these days, topped with a wonderfully elegant French chandelier from Kay O'Toole Antiques.

A bar outfitted in sparkly black granite is another popular gathering spot for parties. "This is where everyone wants to hang out," she says of the space that would have originally been a kitchen had they not combined two units.

Every room comes across as light and airy thanks to the uncluttered, sophisticated décor and lofty views. But an interior room with no view is especially unique





in this home—the wife’s study. The room was built around antique doors from Chateau Domingue that hide office necessities such as file drawers and the fax machine.

Shelves in this space are cleverly outfitted in a myriad of sentimental knick-knacks, books and collectibles that the wife has cherished through the years. “Lots of things are in here that I wouldn’t want scattered all around the house,” she says. “But they’re pieces that I love. Ginger was incredible finding the perfect little spot for them.”

It was incredibly easy acclimating to high-rise living, she says. “It was the perfect solution for us. I love that book, *Eloise at the Plaza*. That’s what I feel like. I always wanted to be Eloise!” ●

THESE PAGES: Antique botanicals make up the walls in the guest room with an antique chest playing against fresh white linens. | The master suite is a picture of serenity with unfussy décor in soft, soothing colors. The four-poster bed was custom ordered from Brian Stringer Antiques. The trunk was retrofitted to contain a lift for the television set. In the background, the husband’s study with adjoining terrace. | Wallpaper in an underplayed design provides interesting texture in the couple’s master bathroom. The stone piece on the wall above the bath was one of the first pieces purchased for the high-rise.

