

New England Home

CELEBRATING FINE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

May/June 2012

Relax!

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Retreat in Vermont
Penthouse Calm
Above Back Bay
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New Design Trends

PLUS: MFA BOSTON
DIRECTOR MALCOLM
ROGERS SHARES HIS
WEEKEND GETAWAY





A sculptural staircase of stainless steel, walnut and Concordia stone separates a long, low space into distinct living room and dining areas. Facing page top: The same elements used in the staircase make their first appearance in the foyer. The hallway, lit by skylight, leads past guestrooms to the master suite.



A Higher Calling

A design team's imaginative approach unleashes the potential in a penthouse condominium in Boston's Back Bay for a result that's nothing short of stunning, inside and out. **Text by Paula M. Bodah • Photography by Trent Bell • Architecture and Interior Design: Hacin + Associates • Builder: Sea-Dar Construction • Millwork: Kochman Reidt + Haigh • Landscape Design: Gregory Lombardi Design and The Garden Concierge • Produced by Kyle Hoepner**





Matte and glossy surfaces play against each other in the tailored, contemporary living room area. *Left:* A coffered ceiling adds a sense of height to the dining room. *Below left:* A favorite piece of art that suggests the skyline outside hangs in the dining room. *Below right:* The designers chose a palette of creams and grays to complement the warmth of the wood.

John Lennon once sang, “Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans.” The man who shares this Back Bay condominium with his wife can probably relate to that sentiment. He was a bachelor when he bought the three-level penthouse space in a 1920s high-rise that was being converted to condos. Hoping to take the unit from the traditional look the developer was planning to something that suited his more contemporary tastes, he got together with architects David Hacin and Aaron Weinert of the Boston firm Hacin + Associates.

“It was a fantastic space,” Hacin recalls, “but the ceilings weren’t overly high and the organization of the apartment wasn’t quite right.”

The master bedroom, for example, faced the city skyline—a magnificent vista, certainly, but the new owner liked

the idea of waking up to a view of the Charles River, so the bedroom would have to move to the unit’s other side.

The living/dining area was one long, low room, a layout that emphasized the horizontal planes with the dual effect of detracting from the views and limiting natural light. “We came up with the idea of celebrating the vertical circulation a bit more, creating a better connection from one floor to another,” Hacin says.

The architects found both challenges and opportunities as they played with various schemes to bring a sense of unity to the three levels. The biggest challenge? All the mechanicals for the apartments on the lower floors made their way through the walls and ceilings of this highest unit in the building. “We had to carefully map out all of the existing mechanicals and create a floor plan that felt like it was flowing naturally around these things,” Hacin explains.

The most welcome opportunity? Nearly half the sec-





Luce de luna quartzite with a high polish tops the walnut cabinetry of the kitchen island. *Far left top and bottom:* The second-level rooftop terrace comprises several seating areas. *Left bottom:* The breakfast area chandelier is actually five separate fixtures hung at different heights.



ond level is an outdoor roof terrace, which inspired the architects to bring the natural light of the terrace into the main living area below via skylight. (The third level is a considerably smaller space that looks out over the roof terrace below and holds a fitness room with panoramic views all round.)

Back on the first level, the main elevator opens to a foyer that offers a preview of the clever work throughout by the architects along with interior designers Kate Kelley and Christine Rankin, also of Hacin + Associates. The ma-

guest rooms, through a set of doors with translucent window panes and into the master suite. The light that floods the hall and the master suite comes from the long skylight Hacin and Weinert installed in the roof terrace above. “The long corridor was very dark,” Hacin says. “With the skylight, the frosted glass and the reflective stone, we brought a lot of light in.”

To the left, a sleek staircase of walnut, Concordia stone and stainless steel divides the long, low living and dining space. “By locating the staircase as a sculptural element

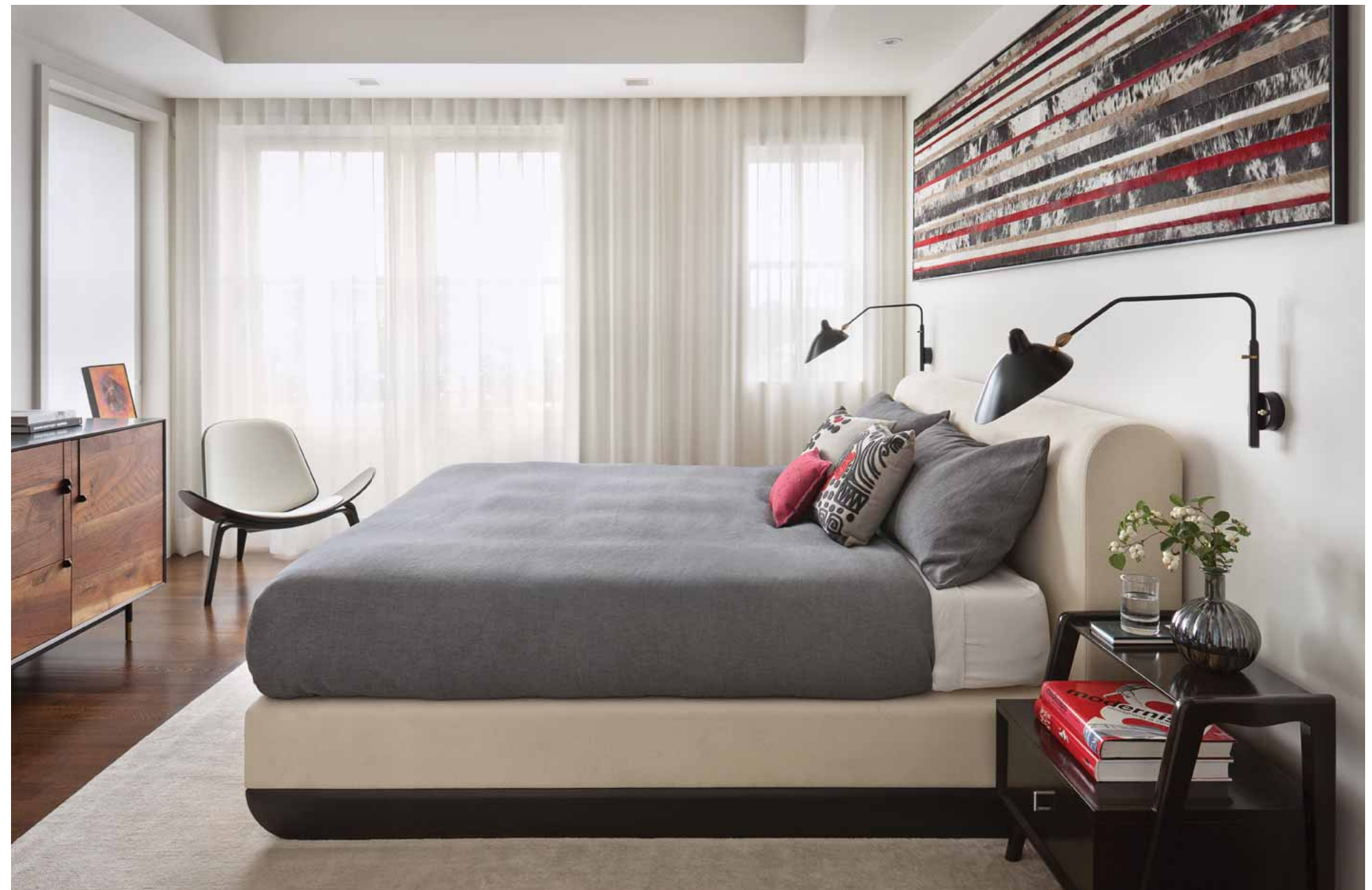
“We came up with the idea of celebrating the vertical circulation a bit more.”

terials here—honed and polished Concordia stone, walnut wood and stainless steel—find their way into the rest of the home, bringing unity to the space.

To the right of the foyer, a long hallway leads past two

between the living and dining areas, we were able to change the scale of the room,” Hacin says. “We created two spaces that are intimate and distinct, but that borrow from each other.”

The homeowners can luxuriate in the master bath, high above the urban bustle. *Right:* Custom-designed and vintage pieces keep company in the master bedroom. The designers created the art above the bed by custom framing strips of hide. *Below:* A modern, colorful wall sculpture complements the stainless steel staircase to the fitness room.



The living room's fireplace is crafted of honed and polished Concordia stone with a mantel of walnut and a narrow accent band of stainless steel at the top. In the dining room, the mix of gloss and matte is repeated in the chairs of leather and chrome that surround the highly varnished rosewood table with its base and insets of gleaming chrome. In both rooms, notes Kelley, recessed ceiling coffers and window moldings that extend down to meet the floor fool the senses into thinking the space is taller than it really is. "We also used Venetian plaster, which adds reflectivity and lifts the ceiling," she says.

Aiming for a sophisticated palette that would play off the warmth of the stone and wood, the design team outfitted the space in shades of steel gray and slate blue. The living room's contemporary chairs, sofa and coffee table have a low profile, another clever move that makes the space feel taller. "We kept things very clean and tailored,"



Kelley says, "but we included a lot of beautiful details."

There's no break in continuity when it comes to the kitchen, where walnut cabinets are trimmed with stainless steel, stone and wood lie side by side on the floor, and frosted glass cabinet fronts echo the doors leading to the master suite.

The unit's second level is all about fun, holding game and media rooms with views of the city skyline and the river, as well as a second kitchen to make entertaining easy. All rooms open onto the spacious terrace, where several seating

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areas, a dining area with a grill and a "living room" complete with a TV are delineated by a series of gardens that bloom in a profusion of color come the warmer months. "The terrace was designed to be a series of outdoor rooms,"

Hacin notes. "It's really a whole other living space."

Now, back to John Lennon's observation about life. While the homeowner and his design team were busy planning his perfect space, he and Kelley made a buying trip to New York City, where they found a circa-1960s sculpture by Marsha Blank. The name of the piece? *Man and Woman*. Not long after, the homeowner met and married the woman who now shares his life and his home.

If his purchase of the sculpture seems to involve a bit of prophecy, the same might be said of the work Hacin and

his team did. As clean, contemporary and handsome as this space is, it's also warm and inviting, functional and flexible—a mix that makes for a happy union, indeed. •

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