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PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLAY MILLER

JEZEBEL takes you inside the two-story penthouse of a discerning high-profile executive

The views aren't from the highest perch in Atlanta, but its location, combined with the two-storied, unobstructed presence, soars above the rest. For the owner, a very private gentleman who had occupied a smaller space in the same tower, the building's million-dollar vistas and ideal location in Midtown more than compensated for the need to completely renovate. When the opportunity arose to move up to one of the very few penthouses in the building, the owner pounced. "It was the best thing I've ever done," he says. "In my opinion, there's no other apartment with the combination of views and style like this in Atlanta."

To renovate and design the interior of this 2,800 square-foot space, the owner called on Lee Bryan, a good friend and an interior designer, *the* interior designer, in fact, responsible for overseeing this dramatic transformation. An Atlanta native, Bryan is an internationally renowned top interior designer. His work has taken him to such locales as Panama, Miami, Beverly Hills, and Washington D.C. While his work is respected all over the world, you may recognize some of his Atlanta projects. He was responsible for such projects as the contemporary automotive showroom at Atlanta Classic Cars and the Mayfair Condominiums to the Cornerstone Condos and luxurious private residences. Bryan explained that before-and-afters of this apartment can only be described as modern minimalism at its very best. "He wanted it to feel very masculine, very minimal," Bryan says.

Renovating the former open loft space was not an easy task. Not only were there barely any real doors, but the paint job was bleak at best, and the original owners had just backed out of their contract after the penthouse was involved in a flood. "We literally just started tearing it apart," Bryan says. Nine months later, from an open loft came two guest bedrooms, three full bathrooms, a media room, and master suite. Additional rewiring and soundproofing was also installed. The owner says, "I wanted a warm, masculine, and comforting feel for my apartment." No doubt the pictures on these pages attest to that.

Immediately as you walk in through the stained ash wood door, you feel at ease. An inclination to explore, to look around, envelopes you. "No formal foyer existed. I wanted some private space for when you initially walk in," the owner explains. "But I wanted to give it a dramatic look." That look was achieved through using an exotic African Wenge wood with aluminum bandings for the wall, where features such as a hidden coat closet and a light frame blend in harmoniously.

Walk through the thin layer of beads in the doorway leading into the main living quarters and you'll feel like you've travelled quite some distance. "He wanted to create a barrier between the foyer and the main part of the penthouse," Bryan says. "He never saw the beads until they had already been installed. Because the owner and I relate so well on the same wavelength, I knew he would like it." In fact, the



beads shimmer; when a light breeze blows through, the individual balls wave and create this overall shimmer effect.

In the main hallway, the owner placed eight square pieces of art he acquired on his many travels abroad. The photographic pieces with Spanish titling set this wall apart and immediately draw visitors and friends in. "The graphic aspect of them and the series work great on this long linear hallway," he says. Overhead, Bryan says, "I decided to add a Frank Lloyd Wright-esque drop ceiling. As you walk through a low space, when you get into the main space and bring the ceiling higher, it makes the main space more dramatic." He adds, "If you came in the front door, and everything was at full height, it wouldn't give you the impact that the height in the main area has. That's why we dropped the ceiling down." Faux-finished peaks with sky colors and low-voltage Xenon cove lighting round out the dramatic entryway. "Everything is dimmable which is very important in creating atmosphere," notes Bryan.

The bedrooms all have a distinct boutique hotel feel to them. The bedroom off to your immediate right once you enter is modeled after a W Hotel. "It's not a huge space, but we wanted to give it some privacy," Bryan says. "We custom-made the bed lower and gave it a full bathroom." The bathroom, which can be ironically described as both warm and dark, craved something dramatic. Hence, the glass sink

with hidden plumbing. "An unusual piece, yes, but a piece that definitely makes a statement," Bryan says.

Take a look at the ceiling as you walk through the walnut and riverstone-encased floors (which Bryan points out are Italian imported pebbles that no one in Atlanta has) and your eye will catch the seemingly antique character to the ceilings and exposed ducts. "I wanted to put character back into the place," explains the owner. Bryan artificially rusted the exposed pipes and ducts and antiqued the ceilings that were originally painted white.

The only areas of the penthouse that serve to even remotely cast resemblances to the residence's prior quarters are the kitchen and master bathroom. Bryan explains, "Though he doesn't cook, he definitely wanted a kitchen that makes a statement." In the kitchen, stylish Siematic appliances complement the edgy styling of the ceiling. "The standard ceiling was an angled rectangle. We reshaped it and faux-finished it with multiple colors in multiple shades of paint," Bryan says. He worked with local artists to create lighting that would complement yet remain distinct in each room. "The kitchen light fixture, as with most of the main lighting fixtures, is a custom and one-of-a-kind piece."

The very minimal living room, located right off the kitchen, benefits from another custom light piece. Made of copper foil and inject-

domicile



ed with low-voltage lighting, “It gives you a warm glow; it looks like paper on fire,” Bryan says. Blackout curtains made of shimmering silk project iridescence on the room. An electronic control unit that handles all the electronics, stereo, lighting, air-conditioning, and a host of different audiovisual systems, along with the alarm system, was installed. Two additional portable remotes upstairs allow the owner to control everything from one source.

The two-story dining room, which the owner says he “plans on taking full advantage of,” houses a steel and wooden table accessorized with leather chairs. Perhaps the one feature more jaw-dropping than the views from the expansive pieces of glass that allow natural light to pour in like water into a glass, is the light hanging from the second story. “I wanted to be able to see through the fixture and bring in all the different elements that are in the house,” the owner says. Hence, all the metals, the copper, and the glass have been infused.

To combat the large amount of light that pours into this sunny penthouse, Bryan installed full blackout curtains over all the windows. “He wanted it relatively dark and cocoon-like,” Bryan says. “It’s not a dining room chandelier that is lighting your table. We sought to encompass the space without restricting its views. From the upstairs, you look *through* the fixture. We didn’t want to obstruct the view too much.” Hand-blown glass, copper mesh, and steel, along with the light source are the ingredients that were molded together to create

this piece of art. A light source at the very top where it connects to the ceiling shines through the glass balls. “At night, you get a strong image on the floor,” Bryan says. The outside terrace, encompassing 180 square-feet, is even adorned with the same lines and motif as the light fixture in the dining room. “We took the design of the fixture and had an artist paint it on the patio floors,” Bryan says. The owner adds, “It projects the essence of the interior outward.”

The second bathroom is located right beyond the dining room. “I wanted the second bathroom to have a clean, fresh look.” Bryan used riverstone on the floor, see-through tiling, and onyx light fixtures. The house sound system even comes to the bathroom. The owner says, “For entertaining, it’s nice to have consistent sound throughout.”

The centerpiece staircase was also one of the items that was basically left untouched. It features a leather wrapped handrail with caps that are refinished oak, and mahogany steps. “It was too pretty a wood to throw away. We refinished it so that it blended in with the same tones as the walnut,” Bryan says. “With the airplane cabling, it stays open.” The upstairs offers the ultimate in privacy. That’s where the master suite, media room, and wet bar are located. “You don’t really have to go downstairs, especially for someone like him, who doesn’t cook” laughs Bryan. While the media room houses a 50-inch plasma, the master bedroom is not to be outdone with its 42-inch plasma television. “It’s almost like one suite upstairs; you just flow from one area to another,”

domicile

