

Toronto HOME

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THE AUTUMN ISSUE



GO WITH THE FLOW

BY ANGELA LAWRENCE
PHOTOGRAPHY BRANDON BARRÉ
STYLING LYNDA FELTON

Floral Arrangements: Quince Flowers

Couple keep new Yorkville condo as a wide-open space

LOCATED ON THE TOP FLOOR

of a newly built luxury building in the heart of Toronto's Yorkville district, this bright and spacious penthouse condo exudes a modern, classic sensibility. With dramatic city views in every direction, 10-foot ceilings, a clean linear design and four terraces, it's an exquisite example of sophisticated urban living.

And that's what the owners were looking for. After many years of living in a large family home in Forest Hill, the husband and wife decided it was time to move. "Since none of our kids were living at home anymore, there were whole floors and rooms that we didn't even go into," the husband says. Though he has worked in the condo construction industry for more than 30 years, he and his wife weren't interested in a condo lifestyle while raising their family. But as empty nesters they're now ready for the transition.

The true beauty of the penthouse's design is in its flowing, open layout. In the living room, metal and porcelain sculptures by Toronto artist Ken Gangbar were used as a unique way of defining the area. The dining room beyond can be separated from the space with a sliding glass wall.



An intimate conversation area is tucked on the other side of the double-sided burnished metal fireplace wall by Montigo. An oil painting by Kim Dorland overlooks black leather chairs by Minotti and a curvy glass coffee table by Vladimir Kagan.



After selling their family home, they bought a 4,500-square-foot raw penthouse space in a mid-sized luxury building. They contacted Elaine Cecconi of Cecconi Simone Inc., a respected interior design firm that specializes in contemporary design. "I've watched the Cecconi Simone style evolve and mature over the years," says the homeowner. "I told Elaine we want a mature Cecconi Simone, something that's going to last and not be a fad."

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(This page) The couple wanted a living room for all occasions where they could comfortably entertain or just watch a movie. "The space is so simple it just flows," says the husband. Large windows are covered with electric blinds by Mera, and white walls and charcoal Minotti sofas offer a neutral backdrop for a collection of colourful, whimsical yet sophisticated artwork.

The couple have had a long relationship with Cecconi, having worked with her on several other spaces, including their previous two homes and business offices. As a result, Cecconi understands their tastes and lifestyle. "They travel a lot and stay at some great hotels and properties," she says. "They also have a heightened awareness of their own preferences and their own esthetic and it's very much in keeping with what we do as a firm."

The raw penthouse space offered exciting design possibilities and, though Cecconi had to work around the location of the kitchen and some plumbing, which were already dictated, it was essentially a blank canvas. "They wanted something contemporary but they still wanted it to be warm and accessible, not intimidating or too austere," she says. "So there are a lot of warmer elements and colours in the millwork, flooring and even some marble." ☞





The kitchen's island is perfect for pre-dinner drinks or a buffet meal. White cabinets are balanced with such warm materials as the graphic Roma Imperial Marble around the inset sink. The island counter and beverage area are made of reconstituted walnut. Behind the sink a sliding Corian panel hides everyday items and a Mem stainless-steel faucet by Dornbracht adds sparkle.



Designed for entertaining, the sleek modern kitchen expresses the couple's love of contemporary design and dislike of clutter. Natural light pours into the space through large windows from Allan Window Technologies. And unique Len Dilegno 48-x-24-inch walnut floor tiles (the first installation in North America) add warmth and subtle drama throughout the penthouse. The dining area beyond can be closed off using a sliding glass wall.


"They entertain often and have people over a couple of times a month. So they wanted a wide open space that flows from one area to the next."

Cecconi also considered how the couple's new urban lifestyle would influence the overall design and layout of their home. "They entertain often and have people over a couple of times a month," she says. "So they wanted a wide open space that flows from one area to the next."

Says the husband: "I think the biggest mistake that people make with condos is that they try to make them into mini mansions. They put in too many rooms. We had a big house with lots of kids and this time we knew we wanted something different."

Elevator doors open onto the penthouse's entry foyer, where soft draperies create understated drama. The palette throughout

the rooms is neutral to create a backdrop for colourful artwork. Warm walnut flooring throughout unites the space. A new product from Italy, the flooring is 48-by-24-inch tiles instead of conventional wood strips.

In keeping with the homeowners' desire for a private retreat that is separate from the common areas, the penthouse is divided into two living spaces. One side consists of the master bedroom suite (a bedroom with his and hers dressing rooms and ensuites) while the opposite side houses the living room, dining room, kitchen, family room and guest suite. The kitchen is accessible from both sides of the penthouse. 

“We love to have friends over as well as explore the city.” _____



(Opposite) The penthouse boasts a large master suite with his and hers dressing rooms and ensuites. The focal point of the wife's ensuite (her favourite room) is an elevated KOS Italia bathtub with Dornbracht fixtures, surrounded by elegant statuario marble. On opposite sides of the tub are a glass-enclosed shower and a water closet. (Below) Every surface in this tiny jewel has a finish on it. The room is wrapped in the same walnut floor tiles used in the rest of the condo; marble was used to frame the modern vanity, tubular sink and floating faucet by Dornbracht; a floor-to-ceiling mirror makes the space appear larger. Swarovski crystal LED ceiling lights add starry sparkle above and act as night lights.



With its sleek white cabinets and long island, the kitchen is linear, modern and clutter free. “The homeowners don’t like clutter and we worked hard to have spaces to tuck away and hide items,” says Cecconi. The kitchen is in the centre of a large open living area bookended by the dining room and family room. An opaque structural glass wall can be pulled across to divide the kitchen and dining room, but when the space is fully open, the couple can seat 30 people when entertaining.

Though they have a modern esthetic, the couple didn’t want a showpiece home. They wanted the penthouse to be comfortable and livable. This is especially evident in the living room where low-profile Minotti sofas offer the perfect spot to watch tv or movies with friends. A dramatic two-sided fireplace wall divides the space (an intimate seating area is tucked on the other side) and draws the eye to one end of the room. “It looks like wood but it’s a hand rubbed metal with a bronze finish,” explains Cecconi. “I think it looks fabulous.”

Instead of traditional screening materials, a metal sculpture by Canadian artist Ken Gangbar was used to define the living room area. Made of twisted metal rods and porcelain disks that look like floating leaves, the sculpture is further enhanced with lighting from the cove above. “It has an organic, almost ethereal quality that is a subtle contrast to the clean lines that are everywhere else,” says Cecconi.

The homeowners’ collaboration with Elaine Cecconi is a winning formula, which has given them the downtown lifestyle they wanted. “It’s the best move we’ve ever made,” says the husband. “We love to have friends over as well as explore the city. We walk everywhere on the weekend... to the art gallery, Chinatown, and beyond. We walk out the front door and I just say pick a direction and we’re off.”

Colourful paintings by Julian Opie and Charles Patcher hang on back-painted glass walls on each side of entrance hallway. A large portrait by Carolus draws the eye into the space where draperies add softness and hide an unsightly electrical closet and exit door. “When the elevator door opens, it’s like you’re entering a really cool boutique hotel,” says Elaine Cecconi.

