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HIGH ART



An entrepreneurial couple retires to New York and builds a technologically savvy apartment that can be operated—with ease—even by guests who lack a degree in electrical engineering.

By LOUISE FARR PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILYANA DIMOTROVA

DESIGNERS WHO USE THE EXPRESSION "BRINGING the outside in" generally mean blending a natural landscape with a home's interior design. The phrase has become something of a decorating cliché, only to become fresh again in the case of this condominium, situated on the 71st floor of a soaring tower of New York's Time Warner Center. The approximately 3,400-square-foot space reflects nothing less than Manhattan itself, with the apartment's muted tones mirroring the surrounding skyscrapers, rooftops, and a distant river—all of which create breathtaking views that are equal to any mountain range or ocean vista.

A few years ago, the Florida couple who owned the apartment sold their information technology business in order to retire early. Now they divide their time between Miami and Manhattan. "We thought, 'Where do people want to live when they retire?'" the wife says. "They want to not drive, they want to go out to eat or to have food delivered. We chose New York, and it's just been dreamy. I look out of my apartment and pinch myself every day."

Whenever the wife is in town, she fulfills her role on the prestigious sculpture and painting acquisitions committee at New York City's Whitney Museum. But she also fulfills her duty as a contemporary art collector—a job she shares with her husband. "The more I collect, the more I realize art is something husbands and wives can have in common," she says, checking off Switzerland, Germany, Puerto Rico, and Poland as destinations where they have traveled to view private collections and acquire new pieces.

FOR INTERIOR DESIGNERS SAM EWING AND Gail Winn of Ewing, Noble & Winn in Winter Park, Fla., and custom installer Victor Rivera of Custom Integrated Systems Corporation in New York, the challenge was to create a space that incorporated high-tech toys that enhanced the couple's art collection instead of distracting from it. "It fell into the category of stealth, which we like to do anyway—but hide the stuff behind the scenes," Rivera says.

"When people walked in, we wanted them to be looking not at the furniture but at the art and the city views," says the wife. "That's exactly what we got."

Despite the couple's mandate, Ewing and Winn were eager to avoid a chilly atmosphere of stark white "gallery" walls. Instead, they chose a paint that they describe as a "palest, almost morning fog" color that deepens slightly in the entrance hall.

"This is their little theater," says custom installer Victor Rivera about the owners' hideaway den (top right). An AMX touchscreen sits on Wendell Castle's mottled mahogany table with black ebony legs.

The muted tones in the main living area (bottom right) mimic those of the city glimpsed beyond the windows. Despite so much glass, sound wasn't a problem for Rivera. "It was so well prepared and put together," he says of the apartment.



"In these buildings, you take the condominium as it is, then if you want to make changes you rip things out. The clients basically trusted us."

*—Gail Winn,
interior designer*



If the owners aren't riveted by what's showing on their TV, they can admire the view from one of two Donghia chaises. The glass orb is by Japanese artist Mariko Mori. "I love Japanese art. There's something about it that's invigorating," the owner observes.

"Just a whisper of a color, but it takes the edge off," says Winn, adding that the home's color palette ranges from bronze to celadon, and moss to shades of slate. "Because of the cool, foggy city colors in the apartment," the interior designer explains, "the city almost becomes a piece of art, too."

Any visitor entering the foyer could be forgiven for thinking that he has wandered into a gallery or an unusually inviting anteroom of a small museum. Sergei Isupov's porcelain piece, *To Cast a Spell*, rests on an oversize mahogany and polished chrome table custom-made by Ron Seff. Hanging above it is a photograph of Robert Downey Jr., taken by noted British video artist and photographer Sam Taylor-Wood. And at the end of the hallway stands Peter Rostovsky's dramatic combination of sculpture and painting titled *Epiphany Model 4: The Meteor Shower*.

Beyond the entry, a sweeping space encompasses the main living area, where an espresso-stained game table and cushy chairs, upholstered in pumice-colored mohair, anchor the end of the room near Lisa Yuskavage's figurative oil painting titled *Grooming*, and a Pat Steir abstract. Dominating the dining end of this great room is Ugo Rondinone's hallucinatory *Bullseye*, an acrylic-on-canvas piece.

ALL OF THE INVOLVED PARTIES FEARED THAT A TELEVISION would detract from the couple's vastly diverse art pieces. Thus, the ingenious ebony-topped mahogany credenza that separates the dining area from the living areas does double duty by hiding a 37-inch Panasonic plasma television. Courtesy of an Auton plasma lift, the screen rises and swivels on demand to face either room. Likewise, the apartment's equipment rack resides in a closet from which it can be rolled out if maintenance is necessary.

The electronics of this New York apartment are magically operated through an AMX wireless remote system. Custom installer Rivera considers the AMX touchpad to be such a work of art in its own right that he thinks nothing of placing it casually on artist Jenny Holzer's marble bench, which is meticulously carved with cryptic truisms. "The first line says, 'A lot of professionals are crack-

TECH TALK: THE TIME WARNER RESIDENCE

In a market driven by ever-increasing screen size, more power, and surround channels that seem to be increasing at an exponential rate, the subtlety of this installation almost comes as a bit of a shock. As the old adage goes, though, the customer is always right, and as Victor Rivera of Custom Integrated Systems in New York relates, a gentle touch is exactly what this project demanded.

"We had to make sure there was a continuous feel throughout the apartment—that the equipment blended in, even when in use, and that nothing felt as if it were out of place in the gallerylike environment," he says. Obviously, a dedicated home theater was out of the question.

The apartment's main surround system, located in the den, embodies the project's design philosophy beautifully. Although the room's 42-inch Fujitsu P42HHA10US plasma TV stands freely and proudly in the middle of the room, Rivera says, "It doesn't overwhelm the room due to its size. The 42-inch frame is actually representative of a lot of the artwork in the apartment." The den's audio is delivered via three Sonance Ellipse 1.0 LCR and two Ellipse Surround in-ceiling speakers, all of which remain practically invisible. Processing and amplification is provided by a Denon AVR-1804 A/V receiver, whose 90-watt-per-channel output may seem comparatively light next to today's 200- and 300-watt multichannel monsters, but given the power handling of the speakers, the owner's sound preferences, and the apartment's extensive soundproofing, the room simply didn't require any more power. *For a full equipment list, please visit hemagazine.com.*—Dennis Burger

RESOURCES

Contractor: Designer Trade Services of Atlanta, Ga. (404.787.8888, designertradeservices.com)

Custom installer: Custom Integrated Systems Corporation of New York, N.Y. (877.730.4247, c-i-s-tech.com)

Interior designer: Ewing, Noble & Winn of Winter Park, Fla. (407.645.4383, ewingnoblewinn.com)

AM/FM tuner, A/V receivers, CD changers, DVD players: Denon (usa.denon.com, 973.396.0810)

Control system, touchscreen remotes: AMX (800.222.0193, amx.com)

In-ceiling speakers, multi-room amplifiers: Sonance (800.582.7777, sonance.com)

LCD TV: Sharp (800.BE.SHARP, sharpusa.com)

Lighting, shade control: Lutron (610.282.3800, lutron.com)

Multiroom music server: ReQuest Multimedia (518.899.1254, request.com)

Plasma TVs: Fujitsu (973.575.0380, plasmavision.com), Panasonic (panasonic.com, 800.211.PANA)

Power conditioning: Panamax (800.472.5555, panamax.com)

Racks: Middle Atlantic (973.839.1011, middleatlantic.com)

Subwoofer: Sunfire (425.335.4748, sunfire.com)

pots," the wife says. "My husband's favorite is, 'Sin is a means of social control.'"

EWING, NOBLE & WINN CUSTOM DESIGNED THE mohair-upholstered sofa with a straight back in order to fit it comfortably on the living room side of the TV cabinet. The setting is complemented with a companion pair of straight-backed armchairs. In the main seating area, graceful wood-framed chairs are trimmed with antique brass nail heads and covered in bronze leather that is finished with a hint of satin iridescence. "The room has a lot of warmth because of the textures—the mohair, the soft leather, the silk and wool rug," Winn says.

Lighting, of course, is highly critical to the apartment's overall effect. New York consultant Dusty Helms suggested dropping the living room ceiling, leaving a perimeter that enabled the lighting—individually set to properly illuminate each piece of art—to be tucked out of sight. "Only if you are standing with your back against the wall looking up would you be able to see the lights," says contractor Eric Gray of Atlanta's Designer Trade Services, who has worked with Ewing, Noble & Winn for nine years. All lighting, including the light-filtering hand-woven Conrad grass-shaded blinds in the Steven E. Earls pattern that resembles raw silk, is operated via the Lutron HomeWorks lighting system, which enables the amount of light in a given area to be controlled in increments. "That is the big power of Lutron," Rivera says.

For the master bedroom, Ewing, Noble & Winn designed another clever cabinet to disguise a second 37-inch Panasonic television artfully. "So many of these plasma television units are so thick and look so heavy," Winn says. "That's why we did this with ends that are slimmer than the center core. The way the stripes [of the ribbon mahogany veneer] were placed on the edges at the foot of the bed made a banding effect, to give it a little more detail."

On one bedroom wall is a Laura Owens watercolor-collage-pencil depiction of a tree. Tucked into a closet, a projector throws four tree images by artist Jennifer Steinkamp onto another wall. "It's a tree that changes seasons, and it's wonderful," the wife comments.

Amidst all the exhilarating openness, the husband decided that he should have a cozy place of his own so that he could read, smoke a cigar, detach himself from the rest of the world, and watch football or listen to music, says Gray. The result is the husband's den, equipped with a 42-inch Fujitsu plasma TV and mahogany-paneled walls crafted in Ewing, Noble & Winn's Florida workroom. Above the television hangs Richard Prince's 2003 painting of a nurse—not a surprising choice considering the wife believes that art can have a healing effect and is able to lift a person's mood on a trying day.

"I just keep buying and buying," the wife says. "I think I understand now why people are tempted to buy homes all over the country: It's to have enough places to put their things." *For a full resource list, please visit hemagazine.com.* 