

New England Home

CELEBRATING FINE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

MAY/JUNE 2008

DELICIOUSLY LIGHT

AT PLAY IN THE BERKSHIRES

A FAIRY-TALE HIDEAWAY

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE VIEW

PLUS A PETITE CAMBRIDGE COTTAGE
GETS A HIGH-STYLE MAKEOVER

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

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REPRINTED FROM THE
MAY/JUNE 2008 ISSUE
OF NEW ENGLAND HOME

The Sky's the Limit

Taking her cue from the panorama beyond the windows of a Boston penthouse, a designer makes the view the focal point of her warm, contemporary interior plan.

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INTERIOR DESIGN: LESLIE FINE | BUILDER: FBN CONSTRUCTION | PRODUCED BY KYLE HOEPNER

The palette for the living room combines cream and taupe with the soft colors of seawater to echo the view below.



LEFT: The designer played up the fireplace by surrounding it with glass tiles and a wall of mahogany with aluminum and glass accents. **TOP RIGHT:** A limestone floor gives the foyer a dynamic look. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Ann Sacks tile frames the mirror in the powder room.





Local artist David Tonnesen crafted the chandelier in the dining area. FACING PAGE: The kitchen, newly opened to the living area, glows with aluminum and glass.

This penthouse has the sort of view for which the word *brehtaking* was coined. From their twenty-first-floor perch in Boston's Inter-Continental, the homeowners gaze out on a panorama that sweeps across Fort Point Channel, the Seaport District, South Boston and miles beyond. How is a designer supposed to compete with that?

Wisely, designer Leslie Fine let the view take center stage. In every change she made to the 4,000-square-foot, three-bedroom unit—and there were many—Fine kept in

mind that the home's focal point lay outside the floor-to-ceiling windows.

The homeowners, a couple with almost-grown children, had lived in Brookline before the Boston-based company the husband works for sent him out of the country in 1992. "We always hoped to end up back in Beantown," says his wife. Now, with a daughter studying at the Berklee College of Music and the husband's not-infrequent trips to the home office, the couple hopes to spend more time in Boston. "Eventually, when my husband retires, it could be our permanent home," the homeowner says.

The homeowners chose Fine as their designer because her warm, contemporary style matched theirs. "My goal

was to create a home that used the view as the main showpiece," the wife says. "I wanted contemporary without a clinically cold feel. I wanted the color scheme to bring the outside in and be congruent with the colors of the ocean."

First, though, some of the unit's basics needed revamping. The homeowner and Fine agreed that the closed-in kitchen detracted from the space. "The unit is all about the view," Fine says, "so the first thing we did was open up the kitchen."

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Rosemary Porto of Luxury Kitchen outfitted the kitchen in aluminum, glass and mahogany. "Leslie had already been working on the unit's design, so my challenge was to blend the kitchen design with the rest of the place," Porto says. "The aluminum was the perfect neutral; it's not really a color, it's more of a non-color, and it has a beautiful luminescence."

Glass wall tiles, a gray-green granite countertop and porcelain floor tiles with a metallic undertone add to the luminescence and fulfill the homeowner's

Lounge chairs in the formal sitting area swivel to face the view. FACING PAGE TOP: A storage room became a swank wine bar. FACING PAGE BOTTOM: A bedroom is awash in the colors of the earth and the sea.



desire to bring the colors of the ocean inside. "I love looking from the kitchen out to the harbor," says the homeowner.

Porto positioned the major appliances so that they'd be unseen from the living room. "When you're in that beautiful living room and you look into the kitchen, you don't want to see appliances," she says. The kitchen, at fourteen by eleven feet, isn't huge, but Porto says, "It looks big and it has a lot in it; there's not one bit of wasted space."

To further integrate the kitchen with the living room, Fine continued the dark wood from the kitchen across one wall of the living room, then added aluminum strips,

Casual comfort defines the living room space, with its roomy sofas and plush lounge chairs in two seating areas.

glass shelves and glass tile around the fireplace.

Construction throughout the home was done by Boston-based FBN Construction. "The unit had a very simple design, with very little detail and very little panache," says FBN president Bob Ernst. Fine added crown moldings and baseboards to the bland walls for visual interest and replaced pre-finished floors with hardwood, tile and stone. "The moldings and the wonderful flooring are among the

things that transformed the unit, making the space equal to the view," Ernst says.

In the foyer, for example, Fine designed a limestone

floor with a geometric design and painted the walls in tone-on-tone stripes. A chandelier of perforated stainless steel, crafted by Boston artisan David Tonnesen, brings interest to the ceiling.

A ho-hum powder room was dressed up with Ann Sacks tile, a Carrera marble vanity and sink, and LusterStone paint to give the walls a suede-like look.

Fine divided the main living room into two seating areas and a dining area. Here, the floor-to-ceiling windows sport new soffits and crown moldings.

"I wanted somewhere to put draperies, but I didn't want to use hardware that would take away from the view," she says.



Casual comfort defines the space, with its roomy sofas and plush lounge chairs. “I’m very concerned about function as well as aesthetics,” says the designer. To that end, she covered the barstools and dining chairs in a fabric from Donghia that looks like leather but is actually washable nylon.

After the homeowner and Fine had agreed on the home’s colors and furnishings, the homeowner sent samples to her art consultant, who then went art hunting in Mexico. “We had a lot of communication about the art, but I didn’t see it until it was time to install it,” says Fine. “It worked so beautifully.”

Though the homeowner wanted the colors of the ocean in the main living areas, her favorite color is red. Fine indulged her client’s passion in the master bedroom, using touches of brilliant red against a background of cream for a look the designer calls “very sophisticated and very sharp.”

Among her needs, the homeowner says, was “a great master bath.” Unfortunately, the his-and-hers bathrooms that existed were small and featureless. Working with FBN Construction, Fine demolished the tiny rooms and reconfigured the space to create a spacious master bath with heated floors, a tub (complete with a niche that holds a TV) and a large shower with multiple heads and a steam option. Limestone covers both floors and walls, and Fine designed mosaics above the tub and near the shower using Ann Sacks tiles in chocolate and cream. The room’s beauty belies the effort that went into working around the existing plumbing. “We had to work really hard with Leslie to come up with a creative way to design the space and engineer the work,” Ernst says. “It was fun.”



The homeowner’s penchant for red is indulged in the sophisticated master bedroom. FACING PAGE TOP: The roomy master bath sports limestone walls. FACING PAGE BOTTOM: A tile mosaic adds interest to the master bath tub.

It doesn’t take long to realize that the indoors is every bit as breathtaking as what lies beyond.

Everybody’s favorite room, though, might just be the wine room. Originally a cement-floored storage space on the twenty-second level that led to the rooftop deck, the room is now a combination mini-kitchen and wine tasting area, with two Sub-Zero refrigeration units that hold up to 147 bottles each. Red-lacquered cabinets, a backsplash of stainless steel tile and the same metallic porcelain tiles used in the kitchen make the room gleam. “It’s a surprise room,” says Porto, who worked with Fine on the design. “You think you’re going to the roof deck and, boom,

there’s this red wine bar in your face, and it’s really warm.”

“Leslie did a magnificent job,” the homeowner says about her redesigned penthouse.

By staying true to her mission to focus on the view, Fine has created a living space that’s like a gorgeous frame on a fine work of art. The outdoors may be the first thing people notice, but it doesn’t take long to re-

alize that the indoors is every bit as breathtaking as what lies beyond. **NEH**

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