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A Cliffside Park apartment undergoes a transformation to showcase

A Cliffside Park apartment was renovated with the owners' art collection in mind. Lighting and a restrained color palette place the focus on the art, while rich textures and details add interest and warmth.



a couple's beloved collection and becomes a canvas for fine living

high ART





Many homeowners find art to fit a renovated space.

In Cliffside Park, one couple's collection spurred a redesign of their 1,400-square-foot apartment. They hoped to create an elegant, minimalist space that would showcase the paintings and sculpture they've amassed traveling the world, collecting the works of one South African artist in particular.

There was a second, more prosaic nudge toward changing the space: The couple wanted to put a high-definition flat-screen TV into the living room. "Very often, new technology points people toward renovating," says interior designer Tere Bresin, who worked with the homeowners. Bresin is president of Beret Design Group Inc. in Upper Montclair and a



Left: The grain of the bleached walnut cabinetry in the kitchen is horizontal rather than vertical. The grain is highlighted by stainless steel inlays, which also complement the stainless steel appliances. **Below:** The expansive windows in the dining room overlook New York City. The pendant light and dining table balance the strong squares and angles of the kitchen.



member of the American Society of Interior Designers.

The homeowners also wanted to take advantage of views of the Hudson River and New York City skyline, visible from the living and dining rooms as well as the master bedroom of the Bergen County residence.

During the initial consultation, the couple expressed a desire to showcase their artwork. “I asked what colors they’d like to use and they said ‘none,’” Bresin says. “That was a bit of a challenge, but I design for my clients.”

Because the apartment is not the clients’ full-time residence (they also have a house in Sagaponack, New York, and use the apartment when they’re in New York City on business), room for guests and entertaining was not an issue. Instead they wanted a highly personal place designed for their needs.

Color & Texture

While the apartment’s color scheme is subtle, it’s never boring. Tones of gray and tan are complemented and grounded by dark woods, creating a unified palette that puts the initial focus on the artwork. But the components of the apartment deserve attention as well.

“The simplicity of the colors demanded a creative use of texture,” Bresin explains. The living room blends a nubby upholstery on the sofas, rich leather on the chairs, a sisal rug bordered in leather, and a striking cocktail table with a top of fired granite. Stainless steel lamps introduce another material used throughout the apartment.

For the living room, Bresin designed a grid pattern that is visually arresting and highly practical. The television and sconces float on the wall, their wiring hidden from view. At the far end of the wall, some of the grids conceal storage spaces, a luxury within the confines of an apartment.

The squares of the grid are echoed throughout the apartment’s design. “To add another layer of interest, squares and circles are repeated in everything from the furniture to the surfaces,” Bresin says. The small squares of the ebonized mahogany floor in the kitchen and dining room blend into larger gray tiles in the kitchen and into the foyer. The circular dining table and the round white and stainless steel pendant hanging above it soften the strong angles of the dining room chairs.

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In the kitchen, cabinetry is bleached walnut, with the grain of the wood on the horizontal. “It’s always fun to use materials in a different way,” she says. “Walnut is not traditionally used in modern kitchens, and cabinetry usually has vertically oriented wood grain.” To underscore the subtle but interesting horizontal grain, stainless steel inserts harmonize with the stainless steel appliances. The counters are Pietra Columbina natural stone, and a gray backsplash complements the counters and the cabinets.

Bed & Bath

The apartment has two bathrooms. His features a custom wenge vanity and storage. As in the rest of the home, a single-light French door with nickel hardware and acid-etched frost-


ed glass capitalizes on ambient light.

In her bathroom, clear glass tiles add texture, while creamy white countertops and tub surround contribute brightness. A cherry vanity cabinet provides ample storage.

The bedroom is an elegant, soothing space, softened by an oatmeal-colored carpet and an upholstered headboard on the modern platform bed. “I wanted to create a clean but interesting bedroom, a kind of European simplicity,” Bresin says.

Lighting & Art

In addition to the varying textures in the furnishings, Bresin designed layers of lighting. As part of the space and light planning, she studied the art the owners wanted to highlight. The apartment is on the top floor of the building, which allowed for recessed fixtures that could be positioned to spotlight the art or provide more ambient lighting. Task lighting was added in the living room and bedroom, and undercabinet lights brighten the kitchen. Automated shades in the living and dining rooms add to the layers of light.

While she allows that the limited color palette is not a typical request, Bresin’s goal was to transform the apartment into a showplace that also functions beautifully. “I love when people challenge me to do something different,” she says. 

Liz Smutko lives and writes in a renovated 1760s Bucks County farmhouse. She still has a lot of trim to paint.

SOURCES Overall: furniture and case goods, designed by Tere Bresin of Beret Design Group Inc. in Upper Montclair. **Living Room:** sofa fabric and sconces, Holly Hunt in New York City; cocktail table, Therien Studio Workshops at Holly Hunt; floor lamps, Hinson & Co. in New York City. **Kitchen:** cabinetry, Rosario D’Armetta of Sicula Renovations Inc. in New York City. **Bedroom:** lamps, Artemide in New York City.



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Left: The homeowners have claimed their own bathrooms. Glass tile and the creamy countertop and tub surround stay true to the minimalist color palette while adding a lighter touch in her bath (left). Wenge cabinetry creates ample storage in his small bath (right).

Below: Softened by the carpet and upholstered headboard, the master bedroom is simple, elegant, and luxurious.

