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INSIDE OUT

IN SEATTLE, A CONTEMPORARY
PENTHOUSE SERVES AS THE
BACKDROP FOR AWE-INSPIRING
ART AND BREATHTAKING VIEWS.

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INTERIOR DESIGN / WHITNEY MAEHARA
AND NANCY BURFIEND, NB DESIGN GROUP
HOME BUILDER / PAUL VASSALLO
AND STEVE MCGAW, SCHULTZ MILLER



On first stepping into the Seattle penthouse that would eventually become their city home, Mia Doces and Mike Harrington saw dark wood, mustard-colored countertops and shiny bamboo floors. But they also saw a wraparound balcony with views of downtown and Elliott Bay, and edgy interior architecture complete with concrete walls and exposed ductwork. “It’s meant to be a modern urban loft, and the previous owners had just gone in a different direction,” says Mia.

While suited to the previous owners’ tastes, “It just didn’t jibe with the overall aesthetic of the building and the unit itself,” says designer Whitney Maehara, who renovated it with her recently retired partner Nancy Burfiend, general contractor Paul Vassallo and project manager Steve McGaw. But the potential of the apartment was easy to see. The floor-to-ceiling windows and expansive outdoor space—“one of the largest decks that I’ve ever seen on a condo,” notes McGaw—were selling points unto themselves.

The couple turned to Maehara and Burfiend, who had come highly recommended by friends, to reconceive the interiors—and to mediate between the couple’s divergent aesthetics. For Mia, it was important to showcase their modern art collection, which includes pieces inherited from her father by Northwest notables. Mike, though, was worried it about it feeling too impersonal. “My husband said, ‘I just don’t want to feel like I’m living in a museum,’ while I said, ‘Are you kidding? That’s exactly what I have in mind,’” she laughs. Mike’s own style veers toward the traditional, as reflected in the couple’s other home in Bend, Oregon.

“IT WAS MIA AND MIKE’S INTENTION TO SOFTEN WHAT WAS HAPPENING ON THE INTERIOR.”

—WHITNEY MAEHARA

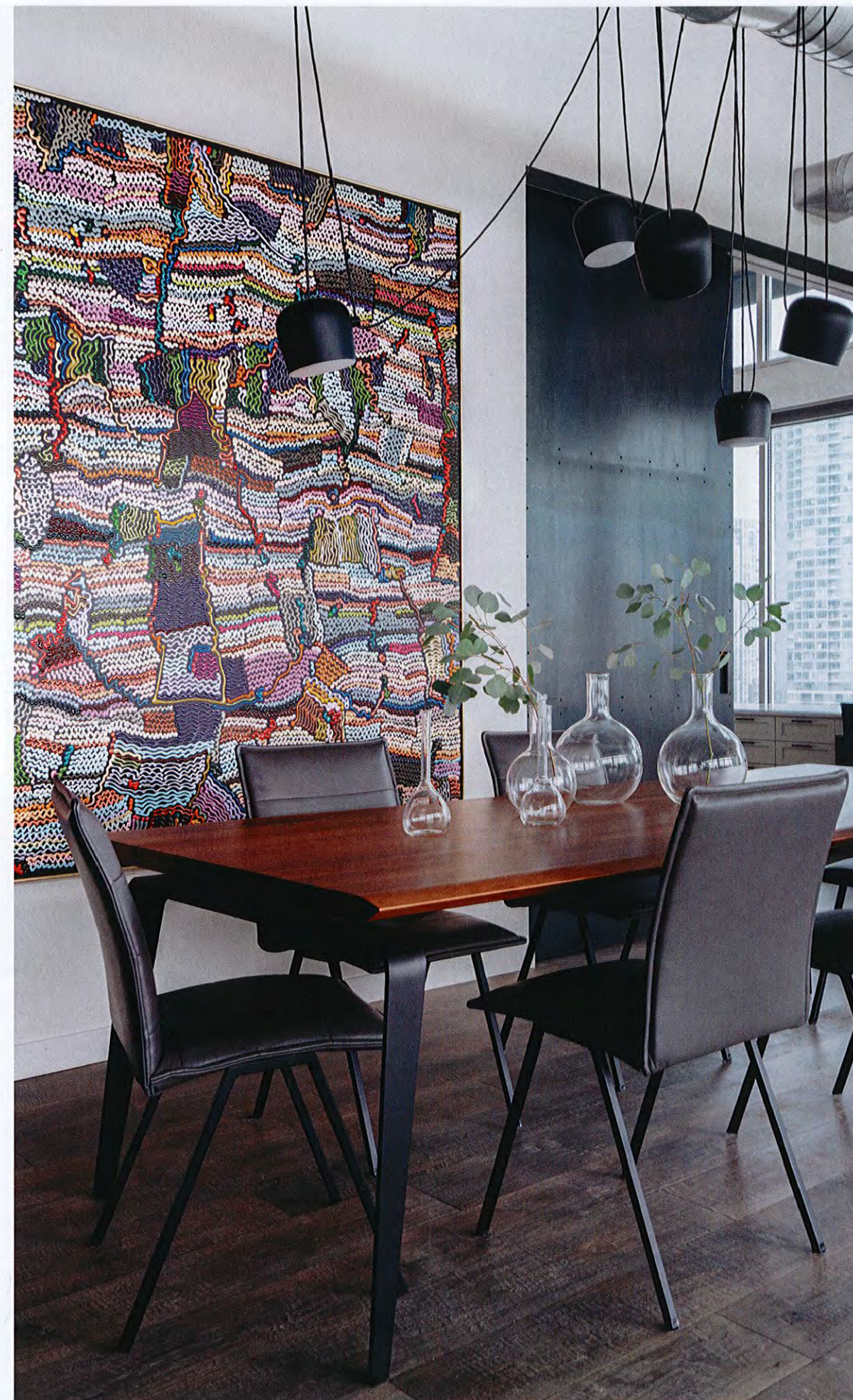
“It was the first time he had done something modern,” says Mia. “I knew that we needed someone to broker that.”

To both emphasize the views and display the art collection to its best advantage, the designers first lightened up the finishes so they would harmonize with the ductwork and exposed concrete. “It was Mia and Mike’s intention to soften what was happening on the interior so that they could focus their views outward,” says Maehara. The walls and the kitchen cabinetry are now pale neutrals, and the new oak flooring is a gray that at once feels soft and rustic yet tracks with the home’s industrial vibe. Even the darker finishes—the backsplash tile and the metal barn door that separates the dining area from the master bedroom—feel muted.

Against this new backdrop, the artwork—and the view—shine. The entry serves as what Maehara calls the “unveiling experience.” There, a large Galen Garwood painting hangs on the wall dividing the entry and living area. “It compels visitors further in,” she says. The natural daylight spilling through from the main living areas invites further investigation into the dining room, where a stunning Alden Mason painting resides. “That piece is what we centered the design around,” Maehara says. “That was the only one we had in mind at the onset of the project.”

In a nod to the downtown vibe—and to solve the problem of lighting posed by the exposed ductwork above the dining table—the team came up with a playful sculptural lighting concept. “We didn’t modify the ductwork in any way,” says McGaw. “So we definitely had to work around it.” The team sourced a light fixture that was flexible enough to wrap around the existing ductwork. “The clients were open to thinking outside the box,” observes Maehara.

In the adjoining living area and kitchen, where splashes of color nod to the Mason piece, the outside views look to the southwest and southeast. The open feel also yields a home perfect for cocktail parties, a key factor for a couple who are avid entertainers. Hosting is even easier given that private rooms are notably separate. A media room and guest area are situated on the other side of the entry and the aforementioned barn door encloses the master suite. “I have people over a lot because it’s such a special spot,” says Mia. Special not just because of the stunning scenery, but also for the fact that it pays homage to Mia’s father and his beloved art collection. “Every time I look at the paintings I think, ‘Oh man, he would love to see them in here,’” she says, “because it feels like the space was just meant for them.” ■



“We came up with a great solution for a light fixture that was malleable enough for us to wrap around the existing ductwork,” designer Whitney Maehara says of the Flos pendants from Diva Group suspended above the Mauro Lippardini table from Ligne Roset in the dining area of this Seattle condo. On the wall is an Alden Mason painting.



Opposite: In the adjoining kitchen and living areas, the team used chartreuse Blu Dot counter stools that contrast with the grays and neutrals of the rug from Driscoll Robbins Fine Carpets. Kreoo coffee table from Trammell-Gagné and American Leather sofa from Seva Home. "We worked with the clients to create a clean, modern and inherently industrial vibe," says Maehara.

Below: The study's existing built-in sectional meant the designers had to work around it to make the room feel consistent with the rest of the home. They chose a Tibetan rug from Driscoll Robbins Fine Carpets to harmonize with the upholstery and a streamlined West Elm coffee table.





Maehara and Nancy Burfiend chose outdoor furniture with clean profiles so as to keep the focus on the stunning views, since the wraparound deck is one of the penthouse's main draws. The Verner Pantan chairs from Design Within Reach and Crate & Barrel bench that surround the Curran table can easily be repositioned to accommodate larger groups.

General contractors Paul Vassallo and Steve McGaw installed a sliding metal door to completely separate the master bedroom from the rest of the home. The calming grays of the Room & Board bed and the rug allow the Jennifer Gauthier painting to take center stage.



To refresh the master bathroom, the team installed new flooring from Pental Surfaces, Ann Sacks glass tile around the tub and Caesarstone countertops. Sleek YLighting sconces add to the industrial feel that flows throughout the home. The artwork is by Mark Miller.

