



A neutral palette prevails in the living area, which is furnished with an eclectic mix of clean-lined, contemporary pieces (a second, mirror-image custom sofa faces this one), fine art and antiques, most of them with an Asian pedigree.



East Meets West

How an interior designer turned a bland Greenwich condo into an artfully decorated, Asian-inspired retirement retreat

By MARIA LaPIANA

Any interior designer will tell you there are jobs—and then there are *jobs*.

Even good jobs are often tinged with something less good: a persnickety client, an unrealistic budget, limited scope. Some projects allow enough creative license that everything else pales in comparison.

And some offer the best of all worlds: a smart, amenable client, freedom to take an idea and run with it, and pockets deep enough to do it right. This project—a top-to-bottom redesign of a two-bedroom condo on the water in Greenwich—was one of those, in the words of its designer, a “dream job.”

“Because my client was adventuresome and open to new ideas, we were able to take her space, completely gut it and start fresh to create her dream retirement home,” says Lynn Garelick, ASID.

It didn’t hurt that the Greenwich designer

had grown up in Hawaii, immersed in Asian culture until her teens; in addition, she’d studied art history, so she was comfortable with the overall Asian theme her client desired. Garelick’s knowledge of Far East décor and antiques gave the client—a Manhattanite with plans to retire to her hometown of Greenwich—the confidence she needed to embark on such an extensive design project.

The client actually found her muse online. Garelick, who has worked as an interior designer since 1977 (she is incoming president of the Connecticut chapter of the ASID), had posted photographs on her website of a sunroom she did for a designer’s show house in 2006. “My client zeroed in on the space because it contained many of the elements she was searching for—it was casual, comfortable, with a soft elegance and intelligence. She especially like the Asian touches.”

PHOTOS David R. Sloane Photography

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In many ways, the project unfolded in textbook style. The client found a condominium she liked on the second floor of an older building with water views and the convenience of a train station nearby.

They set up a meeting, walked through the dark and cramped space together and discussed the client's vision. The designer went out on a limb and said that in order to accentuate what was good about the space, they'd have to eliminate what was bad—and that meant knocking down the walls that entombed the kitchen and ripping out dated fixtures in the kitchen and both baths.

"My client's intention for her new home was to have integrated comfortable interiors that would include an office, a den/guest room and a serene master bedroom suite," says Garelick. "She was clear about her vision and I started this project with this clarity from her."

They gutted the space. With the offending walls down, the kitchen—and all-important

living and dining areas, patio and water views—were suddenly visible on entering. The kitchen was redesigned as an open galley, which gave the entire area "the feeling of a spacious loft," says the designer.

Furnishing the now-open rooms was a labor of love for Garelick. They're all about color, texture, the soothing influences of an eclectic Asian style—and an unmistakable air of sophistication.

"When we met, it was immediately clear what path my client wanted to follow," says the designer. "She had found a kitchen cabinet line in a Japanese style that she wanted, and they set the direction of the total design scheme. The scale of the cabinets and shelving worked perfectly for the confined space that we had in the main living area."

Load-bearing columns were framed out in a style reminiscent of shoji screening to lighten up their presence and integrate them into the kitchen design. The cabinetry, fabricated in the traditional Japanese



Far Eastern influences abound in the condominium, as do practical solutions for small-space living. The den (above) serves as a comfortable guest bedroom when the sofa bed is opened up. In the master bedroom (right), a stunning Coromandel screen is both art and headboard; the custom platform bed was designed around it. And the compact galley kitchen (opposite) is kicked up a notch by rich ginkgo wood cabinetry fabricated in the Japanese *mizuya* style.



LYNN GARELICK PHOTO

mizuya style, is made of ginkgo wood with iron hardware. Open shelving suspended from the ceiling over the island stores china and glassware—and yet doesn't obstruct the view to the living areas beyond. Black granite countertops ground the space, but reflect light as well.

Textures of all kinds carry the day throughout the apartment; and they are apparent from the get-go.

The designer explains: "When you enter, you are immediately struck by those gorgeous ginkgo wood cabinets. Beyond the cabinets, the rattan-style dining and office furniture continues the theme of Asian wood. Complementing the woods are simple wool sisal-style rugs, clean textured sofa fabrics, an iron coffee table and an iron-and-glass light fixture hanging over the dining

table. Rounding out this textural scheme are the beautiful works of art and objects dispersed throughout the condo."

Equally important to the client was a furniture arrangement that would allow both solitary and more social activities.

Twin contemporary sofas face one another in the living area, with the coffee table separating them. On the wall between the sofas, over a lacquered chest, is a flat-screen TV, and across the table is a comfortable Eames chair and ottoman (one of the client's requests from the beginning). The arrangement allows the client to relax, watch TV or read when she's alone. But entertaining is easy, as there's ample seating, with the dining table a few steps away. Stunning sunsets can be viewed through wide-paned windows from multiple vantage points.

Another of the client's needs was home office space, which the designer managed to hide in plain sight behind one of the sofas. There, a desk, chair and built-in credenza serve the purpose unobtrusively.

Down the hall, away from the living areas, the apartment's two bedrooms were refurbished through and through. The smaller room does double duty as den and guest bedroom with additional storage pieces and a TV nestled into a custom étagère. A sofa bed sits between two custom side chests. The bathroom for this room is in the adjacent hallway, serving as a powder room for the main living areas as well.

The master bedroom is a sanctuary and a little trove of treasured antiques. The room is grounded by an Oriental rug in muted earth tones; the wall color is derived from a green

hue in the rug. Serving as the headboard is a stunning reproduction Coromandel screen the designer found in a Stamford antiques shop. Garelick designed the platform bed and nightstands herself to coordinate with it. The restful room is also furnished with an antique chest and another custom étagère (neatly accommodating a TV and custom fabric-covered storage boxes). Rustic bamboo blinds cover the windows.

While Garelick was ultimately responsible for implementing the vision, she says she consulted with her client every step of the way. When recessed lighting was deemed unacceptable by the homeowner, for example, Garelick found and specified ceiling-mounted opaque-glass-and-iron fixtures from Hubbardton Forge throughout.

The fine art, antiques and accessories were curated in several ways. The client contributed some, while the designer shopped antiques and art markets for many others. They found the beautiful Tibetan paintings that serve as a focal point in the living area in a studio in Weston. The antique *thangkas* (or Tibetan prayer flags) in the den were discovered in a Westport shop.

And to think this artful collaboration came about because of a client's Google search. "My website is worth gold!" says Garelick. "Along with direct referrals, this how I meet new clients. I often confer with my fellow designers about the design and importance of our websites. It is critical for us to include a diversity of projects—and to keep our sites up to date!"

A Designer's **Tips** for Buying and Decorating a Condo



"A condo apartment presents a different set of challenges than living in a single-family home," says **Lynn Garelick, ASID**, a longtime Greenwich interior designer who lives in a condo herself.

"A condo townhouse offers many amenities," says the designer, who advises anyone considering condo living to make a wish list. For example, if you want convenience, don't move out of town, no matter how idyllic a setting may be. Garelick lives in the downtown Greenwich. "I like that I can walk to everything: shops, library, market, train, etc.," she says. "And due to its location toward the back of my complex, I enjoy a quiet, beautiful 'tree-house' type of environment as well."

When considering square-footage, keep in mind all attendant costs. "The size of my townhouse is smaller, but very manageable as far as upkeep and maintenance go," says Garelick. "The monthly condo fee pays for all of the maintenance services."

In terms of design, the most obvious difference between an apartment and single-family home is that "there's a lot less space to work with," she says. "This fact alone may necessitate considerable editing of the client's current possessions."

"At the outset, I ask my clients to select the items that are most dear to them, for inclusion in their new condo plan. I advise they start with the large pieces of furniture and move down to the smallest accessories and collections (books, china, art). This is the time for them to select what is most precious—and what will make the cut. After reviewing his or her needs, wants and selections, I do a detailed floor plan of the new spaces. In this way, we both can land on the same page as to what will, and will not, fit into the new home."

Another challenge is fitting a contractor's work schedule into that of a condo complex—no small feat, Garelick says. Work and deliveries are typically relegated to 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, whereas the work schedule for a single family home is much more flexible.

RESOURCES

INTERIOR DESIGN

LBG Interior Design LLC, Greenwich
203/625-8375, lbginteriordesign.com

CONTRACTOR

Kirkpatrick Construction LLC, Old Greenwich
203/637-0199, kirkpatrickconstruction.com

KITCHEN CABINETS

Greentea Design, Toronto
416/462-1459, greenteadesign.com

LIVING ROOM SOFAS/OTTOMAN

Tudor House Custom Furniture, Hamden
203/288-8451, tudorhousefurniture.com

MASTER BEDROOM FABRIC

Anichini, Tunbridge, Vt.
800/553-5309, anichini.com
Osborne & Little, Stamford
203/359-1500, osborneandlittle.com

LIVING ROOM FABRIC

Osborne & Little, Stamford

RUGS

Kaoud Oriental Rugs, Wilton
203/761-9604, kaoudorientals.com

Glen Eden Wool Carpet, Chatanooga, Tenn.
800/843-1728, glen-eden.com

WALLPAPERS

Phillip-Jeffries Ltd., Fairfield, N.J.
973/575-5414, phillipjeffries.com

DINING ROOM TABLE, CHAIRS

Palecek, Richmond, Calif.
510/236-7730, palecek.com

EAMES CHAIR

Design Within Reach, Westport
203/227-9707, designwithinreach.com

LIGHTING FIXTURES

Hubbardton Forge, Castleton, Vt.
802/468-3090, hubbardtonforge.com

ART & ANTIQUES

Greenwich Oriental Antiques, Greenwich
203/629-0500, greenwichorientalantiques.com

Asia Design Studio, Weston
203/434-2017

Asia Imperial Furniture Co., Westport
203/254-2886, asiaimperial.com

Silk Road Gallery, Branford
203/208-0771, silkroad1.com

Harbor View Center for Antiques, Stamford
203/325-8070, harborviewantiques.com

Tony Anninos Asian Art, Sausalito, Calif.
415/331-1573

A. Rudin Furniture; New York, N.Y.
212/644-3766, arudin.com

Vallin Galleries, Wilton
203/762-7441, vallingalleries.com

Mandarin Collection, Westport
203/222-8874, mandarincollection.1stdibs.com

Hampton Antique Galleries, Stamford
203/325-4019, hamptonantiquegalleries.com

FRAMING

Nylen Gallery, Westport
203/227-6861, picturethisofwestport.com