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VERANDA

merry & bright



A PERFECT FIT

In the hands of a Houston fashion designer, a light-filled penthouse turns out to be the ideal backdrop for crisply tailored furnishings and glamorous accents that marry classic and contemporary.



Curved forms, from a Swedish Empire daybed to an acrylic console, soften the strict architectural lines. Florence Knoll coffee table and Mies van der Rohe chairs, Design Within Reach; daybed and custom folding screen in a cotton ticking; 1940s Italian starburst mirror, Area; floor lamps, Circa Lighting; art, McKay Otto.



LAURANN CLARIDGE KNOWS HOW to art direct an evening. “We pull up all the window shades to reveal the night sky, with the city lit up around us,” says the veteran Texas style arbiter. “Then we put on all the inside lamps and fixtures—every one is on a dimmer—light a few candles, and voilà, a diffused, low-lit, sexy environment is achieved.”

It’s lovely to float 30 floors above a twinkling Houston when you’re having a night in, and it’s even better when you have an educated eye. Claridge and her sister, Lizbeth King, are the founders of Claridge + King, a line of tailored women’s clothes that takes its cues and fabrications from menswear—boyfriend shirts and sleepwear are special-

ties. She is also a contributing editor at large for *PaperCity*, a Houston and Dallas society magazine known for its fashion and design coverage.

In a past life, she was immersed in all things culinary as a Paris-trained pastry chef and host of *Food Talk with Laurann Claridge*, which won a Best Radio Show award from the James Beard Foundation. You could draw a parallel between the multitasking Claridge and Carrie Bradshaw: Renaissance women, tastemakers, and, for a long time, hopeless romantics.

And then William Zeitz came along. The shy New Englander, a creative director and brand-strategy consultant, met the gregarious Houstonite at, of all

Laurann Claridge knows what she likes: "A TIMELESS LOOK," she says, "that doesn't feel like its expiration date is looming."



Charcoal-stained floors ground the airy, light-filled living room. Custom slipper chairs in a Pindler cotton velvet; Alexa Hampton sofas in a Donghia flannel, Hickory Chair; Mies van der Rohe coffee table, Design Within Reach; walls in Classic Gray, Benjamin Moore; photographs, Robin Broadbent. OPPOSITE: Laurann Claridge and William Zeitz in their dining room.



Traditional touches give a new high-rise apartment a sense of permanence. ABOVE: Pendant, Ralph Lauren Home for Circa Lighting; chairs, Mainly Baskets; cabinetry in Plummett, Farrow & Ball. LEFT: Nickel pendants, Restoration Hardware. OPPOSITE: Chandelier, Circa Lighting; 19th-century chairs, David Lackey Antiques & Art; rug, Carol Piper Rugs.

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places, a lingerie trade show in New York. A fast friendship. A whirlwind romance. A wedding in Houston in 2012. The combining of households was nigh. Zeitz would be coming from Maine, Claridge from much closer: the tower next door, where she had lived for many years. “William had quickly become accustomed to the convenience, safety, and ease of the high-rise life,” Claridge says of their courtship phase, “even without a lot of convincing from me.”

A penthouse in the neighboring twin building had lured the newlyweds with its 2,300 square feet of raw space, gutted to sell. “The opportunity to do exactly what we wanted,” says Claridge, “was too tempting to pass up.”

In came custom-made cabinetry, fine millwork, and plentiful gray-veined white marble. Down went oak floors stained a bespoke charcoal gray. (The couple are mad about grays.) Up went wall-filling bookcases in the dining space and a built-in china cabinet in the breakfast area, with framed-glass

doors so Claridge can see her collections of shapely white china and vintage silver.

The refined shell, equal parts contemporary and classical, set the stage for decorating. Claridge stirred together “pieces that lived different lives in our separate homes,” she explains. She brought an antique Swedish daybed, a sleek acrylic console, and a Biedermeier chest of drawers. Zeitz brought a pair of commanding Barcelona chairs and two boxy sofas covered in charcoal flannel. And they both brought books—lots and lots of books. “Books give a home soul,” Claridge says. “I’m crazy about our dining room/library.”

After some judicious editing of individual possessions—it’s in Claridge’s nature, after all—the penthouse crackles with a delightful tension between old and new, his and hers, classicist and modernist. The art director knows what she likes: “a timeless look,” she says, “that doesn’t feel like its expiration date is looming.” □

The master bedroom pairs masculine fabrics with gold-accented furnishings. Vintage Paul McCobb chaise, Antiques du Monde; lamp, Thomas O'Brien for Circa Lighting; walls in Pavilion Gray, Farrow & Ball; art, William Betts. OPPOSITE: Bed and coverlet, Legacy Home; chair in a Kelly Wearstler for Schumacher fabric, Donghia; vintage Baker chests, 1stdibs. For more details, see Sourcebook.

