

A photograph of a modern penthouse interior. The room features a large window with a view of a city at dusk. The floor is made of polished wood, and there is a large, patterned rug. A dark wooden bar is in the foreground. The ceiling is white with recessed lighting. The walls are covered in a textured, light-colored material. A large framed picture of a forest is on the left wall. In the background, there are two armchairs and a small table.

POSH PERSPECTIVE

WITH ITS SERENE SOPHISTICATION, THIS COSMOPOLITAN
PENTHOUSE IS SHEER URBAN BLISS



FROM THE GLASSED-IN northeast corner of Donna and George Dawson's penthouse condo, you can survey the silent migration below of headlights and head tops and, with a Scotch in hand, you might conjure up Jimmy Stewart overlooking Manhattan in Alfred Hitchcock's 1948 thriller, *Rope*.

OK, it's not New York City, and the only victim here was a gloomy room, choked in dirty carpet and bumpy walls. But after being gutted, reborn and nurtured into sophistication, this 4,100-sq.-ft. urban perch defines urban bliss.

"Everybody talks about the view of the river valley but the view of the downtown is so unique," says George. "I think it's just marvelous."

Three years ago, George, a senior vice-president at Colliers International, and his >>



The fireplace separating the living room from the library/sitting area seems to float; it's actually located down two steps.

interior-designer wife Donna, sold their vintage old Glenora home and bought a condominium in Hyde Park. The 38-year-old high-rise that was one of Edmonton's first condo developments is located on 115th Street just north of Jasper Avenue. With their twins Luke and Jordan pursuing careers and their third son about to do the same, the couple traded their backyard for two balconies and a 500-sq.-ft. rooftop deck, and designed a serene, modern home free of noise and clutter "for adults," says Donna. Boasting piped-in music everywhere, including the deck, a bar they introduced to the home and a steam shower, their new address in the sky is all that and more.

The voluminous two-bedroom-plus-media room-and-home office abode occupies the

north half of Hyde Park's top floor and affords the Dawsons an omni-directional view of downtown. "The best are the rainbows. Lots of people just don't see them," says Donna, who marvels at the sun's daily arc from pale pink dawn to golden-turquoise dusk, as well as the supertime fly-bys of private jets en route to the Municipal Airport. On a winter night, with city lights aglow under fresh snow, it's hard to pull your eyes from the panorama. But when you do shift your attention indoors, Donna's exquisite taste and creativity do the impossible: make you forget the view.

Even with 10-foot ceilings and wide open space, the home retains a warm, intimate atmosphere which emanates both from the multi-hued santos mahogany floor, the soft accent lighting above, and a central fireplace

wrapped in a surround of black granite. Benjamin Moore's "cloud white" walls offer a muted venue for large, stirring works from such Canadian-based artists as James Lahey, Brent McIntosh and Alice Teichert. Slabs of corduroy-textured concrete that mirror the building's exterior — an original feature the Dawsons retained during a 10-month cosmetic makeover — occupy sections between yawning windows and canvas.

The corner kitchen faces southeast; its patio doors open onto a courtyard deck that separates this penthouse from the one to the south. A wall of maple cupboards in espresso stain flanks a quarter-pie-shaped island topped with granite and inlaid with a glass stovetop — precisely placed for storm tracking as you cook. A band of red paint



The eye-catching backsplash is actually a red painted wall covered in glass.

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covered in clear glass serves as the kitchen’s innovative backsplash.

The island’s granite top had to be cut because the slab was too big for the five-by-nine foot elevator, one of several obstacles which challenged the Dawsons’ contractor, Habitat Studio and Workshop, during demolition and renovation. Habitat constructed a bin on wheels to fit snugly into

the elevator for the removal of rubble and the transport of new materials — but still had to haul a few oversize items, such as mouldings, 18 floors up through mid-stairwell.

“Working with Donna, she’s got an amazing eye. She picked some beautiful products for us to work with,” says Norm Perrin, Habitat construction manager, citing her choices of stone and wood, and various

textures and colours. “It’s the combination of all the products — that’s the key to a good renovation, how everything fits together.” That cohesion emerged only after months of painstaking planning. Donna, whose expertise lies in modernizing old, tired style, filled an entire notebook with thoughts and sketches before and during the reno. With retirement imminent, this was to be her swan song. In fact, it’s more like an opera.

A condo community is definitely not a traditional one, the couple admits; you live with common rules and restrictions and neighbours at close proximity. “But once we close the door, we’re home, we’re in our own space,” Donna says. “We’re on top of the world.”


As we stand in the living room near a wall >>



Top: A built-in wall of touch-latch cabinets tucks china, candlesticks and placemats out of sight.

Bottom: The homeowners relax in their favourite nook.

of windows, we're drawn again to the white tableau outside. Of all the delightful features — the steam shower, the bedroom's spacious walk-in closet, the ribbon mahogany shelving — I ask which is her favourite. She gestures to

an armchair nestled in a corner of floor-to-ceiling windows. "I like to curl up there with a book," she says and, as if it were necessary to confirm the presence of magic, she adds, "you feel like you're floating." 

THE SOURCE

FURNITURE

Off-white living room chairs with wood trim by Bernhardt; dining room chairs: Finesse Home Living (4210 Gateway Blvd., 444-7100)

Off-white cotton couch; ostrich-print leather ottoman: all custom-made by Phillip's Upholstery Ltd. (8211 56 St., 465-7393)

Dining room table made of an olive tree root: bought 28 years ago at Le Belle Arti (16844 111 Ave., 454-0677)

Ultrasuede, chrome and wood kitchen stools: Scandia Furniture (10560 Mayfield Rd., 483-4949)

Bergere armchairs in window corner: William Switzer & Associates Ltd. (6-611 Alexander St. Vancouver, 604-255-5911)

FLOORS

Santos mahogany: Touchwood Flooring (10603 170 St., 444-3694)

RUG

Naturally dyed wool dining room rug: Indio Designer Rugs and Furniture (620 17 Ave., Calgary; 403-229-0156)

CABINETS

Dining room's wall of touch-latch cabinets: Hughes Interior Millwork (16028 121A Ave., 413-3155)

Kitchen cabinets in espresso-coloured maple: Superior Cabinets Edmonton Ltd. (6920 76 Ave., 468-4242)

STONE WORK

Granite kitchen countertop: Venato Stone Inc. (11536 142 St., 455-8525)

ART

Sandblasted glass vase in dining room cabinet: by west coast artist Gary Bolt (West End Gallery, 12308 Jasper Ave., 488-4892)

Alice Teichert painting over couch; Jonathan Forrest geometric painting on window wall; Brent McIntosh forest painting over bar: (Peter Robertson Gallery, 10183 112 St., 452-0286)

Painting in kitchen: by homeowner Donna Dawson