

# interiors<sup>®</sup>

A modern interior space with white walls and a light-colored wooden floor. In the foreground, a white rectangular platform holds three white, cube-shaped objects. Each cube has a glowing rectangular opening on its top face and a glowing vertical rectangular opening on its side. The background features a large white pillar and a series of circular wall lights. A large white sphere hangs from the ceiling on the left.

ART IN DESIGN



# BOSTON ACCENTS

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The one unforgivable sin," quipped the late Christopher Hitchens, "is to be boring." In design, the same holds true. Though it was in good condition, this 2,400-square-foot apartment near Boston's Beacon Hill, purchased by a real estate executive after his divorce, had committed this exact transgression. The circa 1900 townhouse in which it resides had made the conversion to contemporary apartments taking nary a single risk. "It was seriously Bonnie Bland," says designer Dee Elms, not mincing words.

Not ideal when one considers the 50-year-old owner's stated aim: "I wanted it to be different, and for my kids to love coming here with their friends," he says of his two teen daughters and 21-year-old son. "I wanted them to think it was cool." Injecting cool—or what Bostonians sometimes call "jam"—would take some doing.

Elms made an immediate impact in the living room, where she returned some of the building's turn-of-the-last-century grandeur by continuing the existing paneling all around the room, cleverly concealing storage behind it on the fireplace wall. But she gave things a modern twist by layering on a high-gloss gray lacquer and reimagining the hearth in steel. "The place gets a lot of light," observes the owner, "so going with the dark colors worked." There is also a swanky bar backed with antiqued mirror tiles from Ann Sacks.

Then Elms piled on a moody mix of rich textures—a J.D. Staron Angora shag rug, a custom velvet sleeper sofa from Bradley, an alpaca-upholstered Hans Wegner Papa Bear chair and Holland & Sherry cashmere-blend fabric dressing the bay window. "We love texture," says the designer. "It's a way of getting fullness without the busyness of pattern." The one pattern used—on a velvet Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams Duke chair—is subtle and feels more like woven texture than pattern. Crowning the whole scene is a discreetly glamorous Prometheus chandelier by Melbourne designer Christopher Boots.





The other major makeover was the kitchen. The island was so voluminous that it left no room for a breakfast area with banquette seating, which the owner desired. But he wasn't quite prepared for the ambitiousness of Elms's plan. He was fine with reducing the size of the island to accommodate a breakfast nook, but Elms knew that if they didn't also remove a dropped soffit in the middle of the kitchen (at considerable cost), the Holly Hunt Dome pendants would not align correctly over the island and the balance of the space would be off. Elms prevailed. To her surprise, however, not much persuasion was required when it came to the color palette. "I told him I wanted to paint his cabinets black and use black wallpaper," says Elms. "Most clients would think you've lost your mind. But he loved it, and it really transformed the kitchen." The darkness is moderated with orange Saarinen chairs from Knoll and a colorful Beatriz Milhazes work brought in by art consultants at S3 Contemporary.

Similarly bold was the choice of a hand-painted Porter Teleo wallpaper in the dining room. For this, Elms took her cue from her client, whose inspiration book included an image that resembled graffiti. "I love the movement of it," says Elms. "It gives the dining room so much life and energy." The homeowner agrees. "This is the room people notice first," he says. As elsewhere, the primarily gray, black and white palette is relieved by color—namely the chartreuse Minetta chairs from Holly Hunt, which Elms gathered around a table from Casa Design Boston and lit with a voluminous Cloud 37 Orb chandelier from Apparatus. "We were using lots of grays, so moments of color were important," Elms says.

Not everything was dark and moody. "The family room was all about being more casual," says Elms, "so I wanted it to have more of a brightness." Here, purple pillows, a mini Papilio desk chair from B&B Italia and an intensely jewel-toned Stephen Mueller painting on linen shine against the room's paler grays. And the Meridiani sectional boasts an off-white indoor-outdoor Holly Hunt fabric that can stand up to strenuous adolescent lounging and sleepovers. Each of the daughters' bedrooms has one big statement on an accent wall—an iris wallcovering from Flavor Paper in one, a custom watercolor mural from Black Crow Studios in the other. But otherwise, walls are light.

The moodiness returns briefly in the owner's bedroom, which is swathed in a tactile gray silk wallcovering from Phillip Jeffries. Chainmail Boa triple pendants by Fuse Lighting hover above an upholstered August bed by Nathan Anthony and Jasper bedside tables from Bright Group, giving the room a dramatic bearing. In one corner, color returns in the form of an orange Birdie floor lamp from Casa Design Boston, perched near an Orelle wing chair from Holly Hunt.

There is so much interesting design to feel and see in this apartment that the owner practically suffers a form of separation anxiety. "I love this place so much," he says, "that every time I have to go away on business, I really feel how much I hate leaving it." That kind of pull is anything but boring. ■ *Elms Interior Design, elmsid.com*