



# SKIMMING / THE CLOUDS

DESIGNERS: ALICE COTTRELL + RICK ROZAS

TEXT: ARIANNE NARDO PHOTOGRAPHY: STEPHEN KARLISCH











Child prodigies and venture capitalists may have the luxury of cutting to the chase, but interior design lives for the slow build. Not long after a San Francisco couple moved to Dallas did the splendors of post-Reno, move-in-ready reveal their sexy hustle: a Bulthaup kitchen, sea grass limestone floors coursing 2,500 square feet, an extended terrace—all the voluminous swag of a one-bedroom residence skimming the clouds in the city's chic One Arts Plaza building. And yet those blank, virginal virtues had the audacity to tussle with the couple's expectations: a home that vaunted their collection of art and antiques; a place that would be stylish on and off-duty.

Big D is not a city of wallflowers. That bright and booming Texas hospitality played matchmaker for the couple, who were introduced to Dallas-based interior designers Alice Cottrell and Rick Rozas via the concentric circle of family friends/clients. Long-time collaborators melding decades of creativity, designing hotels and interiors, Cottrell and Rozas approached their new client relationship at a caramel-coated pace. "Choosing a designer is like dating—it doesn't get easier, it gets harder," Rozas says of another worth-the-wait endeavor.

The process was gradual; furniture and art were rearranged, area rugs introduced, suggestions of pattern explored, but it was the science of opposites that aroused the home's confident new direction. The clients' sublime Biedermeier furniture was purchased years ago from the premiere Chicago dealer Rita Bucheit and New York's Iliad Antik. The post-Napoleonic furniture was made from 1815 to 1830, with unrivaled gems from the workshop of Viennese master craftsman Josef Danhauser.

As proud collectors, the CEO and his wife, a retired investment banker, naturally grouped the pieces together in the dining area, but once a few burl walnut, umbrella-backed, devastatingly glamorous ebonized side chairs were introduced to the cool modernity of the Bulthaup kitchen, everything changed. "The transformation really involved those chairs," says Rozas. "After corralling them to the kitchen area, we addressed their traditional upholstery, which was very ornate, and we felt it was drawing too much attention in the room. It was too historic." Spiriting away the lavish red, green and gold, the pair chose inky black upholstery for the rouge kitchen set, and a rich mocha/purple fabric from Decortex with Houlès trim for the dining chairs—a move that required gentle persuasion.

Rather than the bang of heart-stopping changes, the designers let slight, easy gestures billow. After the muted, cloudy skies of San Francisco, Texas sunlight was a major change for the clients, Cottrell says. To thaw the stark white intensity, the duo chose a warm white paint that "wasn't chalky or flat," explains Rozas, "we wanted to give depth to the room, and the warmth of the rich chair fabric helped absorb the light." The Orten'zia lamp by Italian studio Terzani sits in the kitchen, where the wife, a passionate cook, wanted nighttime light. Rather than a fixture, the lamp creates a dramatic diffusion of abstract flowers.

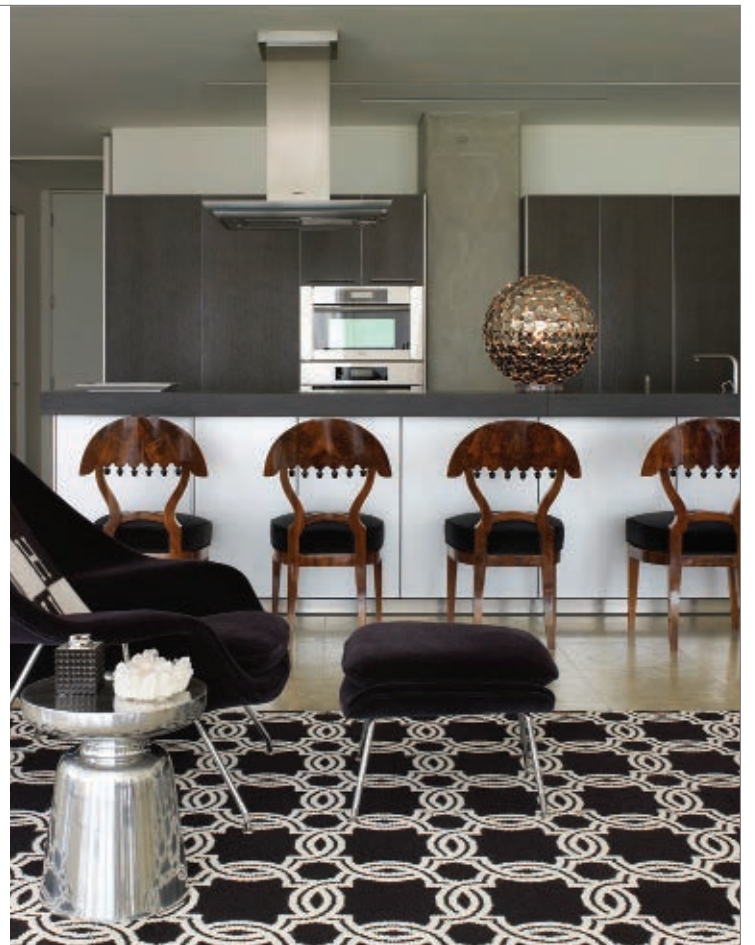


































Loft living is the ultimate for suburban kids with start-up dreams, dying to lose the curfew and dive into the city, but they aren't the only ones. The city's tastemakers have been feeling friskier, unflinching at design risks in new settings (and maybe even trading in those gracious mansions.) Dallas is under the international influence with the remarkable Dallas Arts District—home to this high-rise—and its astounding architecture by Sir Norman Foster, Rem Koolhaas, I.M. Pei and Renzo Piano. This unit has the views and the proximity, all it needed was the designers' finesse. "With these monumental spaces, you have to create intimacy and bring them down to a human scale, which is why we created different seating areas, places for conversation and to relax," says Cottrell. The living room is a stylized mixer of extroverted patterns, rare mementos and sleek, mellow characters: slipper chairs in a gutsy Romo print, tufted ottomans in Zimmer + Rohde velvet, glossy white coffee tables, an Adrienne Landau fur throw found at David Sutherland and a throw pillow in a shimmering mirrored Donghia fabric—perfect for effervescent evenings.

Serious collectors have the enviable fortune of living every day inside the fantasy of their connoisseurship. These owners have 1920s Catteau vases in the master bathroom; they adore hollowware by silversmith George Shreve for its purity and undulating forms; and they have an eight-pound Shreve tray purchased at a Sotheby's auction that once belonged to the de Young family, one of the original San Francisco tycoons. "They liked the modern way we blended their antiques—and the collection they have is gorgeous, they have such precious possessions," says Cottrell. This alloy of treasured and contemporary leads to sumptuous pairings: Shreve candlesticks vibing off Italian artist Alessandra Rovati Vitali's striking crystallized tumbleweed creations found exclusively at the darkly fabulous local emporium Grange Hall.

Masterfully averting a look Rozas calls "the showroom in exile," he and Cottrell conducted compelling scenes like the edit-friendly assemblage of a classic Womb chair nesting with a Fornasetti pillow on a punchy Interior Resources rug. When escorted by the couple's cherished, Louis XVI Transition mirror, all dressed up in carvings and embellishment, nothing in the composition is too dominant or coquettish. Along the same wall is a selection of Keith Carter photography, and a peek into the master bedroom showcases the contour of a creamy custom headboard.

For evenings when the shoes are kicked off, the couple retreats to the dual TV / office area. Cottrell and Rozas revived the clients' generous sectional sofa (large enough for "six or eight people who don't know or like each other," Rozas jokes) with an earthy, cashmere-cozy Castel fabric. "This fabric has beautiful shading, and we like using contract fabrics for upholstery because you don't have to baby them," says Cottrell. For dinner and a movie, the clients' only request was a table at the right height so they could eat comfortably. This triggered a maddening search for the right one, which ended up being a vintage acrylic piece by Lion In Frost, purchased from the James McInroe showroom.

Sometimes neutrals are jeered at for being prudish, but this home appears self-possessed and interesting even with the absence of strong color. Elements like the sheepskin rug from Christoval Pelts or the irresistible Manuel Canovas flocked wallcovering and Ligne Roset chairs in the dressing area don't stray far from luxury. For Rozas, the style reflects the unassuming, cultivated sensibility of the clients. "People are more comfortable with androgyny, we can enjoy those traits in each other. We like the crisp architectural feel of this home, and by building in the fine art and layering, we created a feeling of sophistication." ■ Alice Cottrell, 214 741 9252 [alicecottrellinteriordesign.com](http://alicecottrellinteriordesign.com); Rick Rozas, 214 923 8777 [rickrozas.com](http://rickrozas.com)