

THE ODYSSEY

ONE WOMAN'S QUEST FOR MORE SPACE LEADS TO A PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION, BOTH SPIRITUALLY AND AESTHETICALLY.

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INTERIOR DESIGN Shanon Munn, Ambi Design Studio Inc.
BEDROOMS 3 | BATHROOMS 3 | SQUARE FEET 3,000



When a homeowner was looking for a change of address, she brought only a few things from her old life: an armoire that belonged to her grandparents and two small rugs purchased in the mountains of Turkey. She had left behind an antiques-filled apartment with curved walls in a 100-year-old building—"very old-world," she says. But after 22 years, she had grown tired of using her dining room as a home office—and never having anyone to dinner.

In 2010, the woman's realtor showed her a 21st-century penthouse in a four-unit building in the Kalorama area of Washington, D.C. Its 1,000-square-foot rooftop terrace, along with a large home office and working fireplace, sealed the deal, but adjusting to the new space took time. "Everything [in the former space] was round, and this place is a rectangle," she recalls. "It was jarring to me." More jarring still: She had auctioned all her antiques, and for 18 months, sat on patio furniture in the penthouse as she contemplated a new design. "I was just living in this empty space," she recalls. "It was a painful shift."

Eschewing traditional arms, the loveseat in the living room features slight "wings," making it suitable for sitting or reclining near the fire. Over the mantel is a print by artist David Wurtzel from his "Odyssey" series. The custom wool-and-silk rug from Galleria Carpets & Rugs was woven in India.



The dining room's oval chandelier was customized by CX Design in New York. Interior designer Shanon Munn devised the table base to support the slab top, which was designed and made by a friend of the homeowner. Chairs are by Christian Liaigre.



A Chris Lehrecke daybed in the media room does double duty as an ideal spot for reading and a bed for the owner's overnight guests. Munn covered the piece in "the softest indoor-outdoor white fabric." The bookcases were made by McLean Artisans.

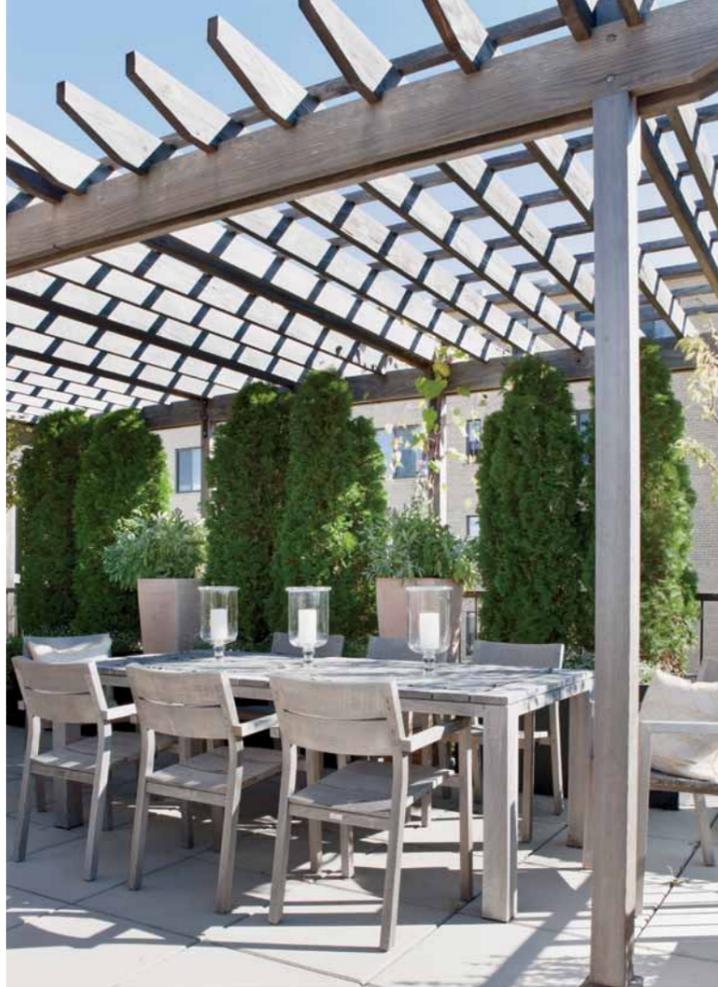


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The homeowner interviewed several designers during that time—"a lot of well-known people who were interested in telling me what they liked, rather than discovering what I wanted to create." Then, a friend nudged her to consider interior designer Shanon Munn. The owner was immediately struck by her mission statement, which reads, "The cornerstone of a successful project is good communication ... by first understanding a client's dream, and then making it a reality." After meeting with Munn, she knew she had found a companion for her exploration of a new, modern aesthetic.

"She shed everything, and it changed her," Munn says. Her art in particular reflects the spiritual shift that came with the new environment. Indonesian Torajan panels, which have prayers and stories carved into them, dominate the living and dining rooms. A Buddha stands sentry in a hallway, while a large starburst installation

The media room's green sectional, designed by Munn, provides an unexpected shot of color in an otherwise neutral palette. Over the sectional are six more black-and-white prints by Wurtzel from the "Odyssey" series.



The 1,000-square-foot rooftop, with a view of the National Cathedral, has two dining areas, a small prep kitchen and a grill. The homeowner also added a pergola, providing both shade and privacy for rooftop entertaining.

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in the master bedroom, fabricated by Shelter Studios in Silver Spring, Maryland, was inspired by Native American art and the circles of ancient calendars; it was created with 17 layers of Venetian plaster. The owner had also received a housewarming gift for her new penthouse: a print illustrating a scene from Homer's *The Odyssey*. That print hangs over the fireplace—a symbol of sorts for her own journey to a destination infused with elements both modern and primitive, serene and filled with light.

Munn further translated her client's ideas into the floor plan. In the living room, for example, she persuaded her client to forgo furniture clustered only around the fireplace in favor of two distinct seating arrangements. The result is more usable space, both for intimate conversations and entertaining on a larger scale.



Washington, D.C.-based gardener Michael Ray Anderson tends to the rooftop's plantings, which mix ornamental varieties with fruit, herbs and vegetables. Espaliered apple trees and an Asian pear tree are in containers; an automatic irrigation system waters the plants.



The homeowner surrounds herself with spiritual elements, such as a Buddha perched in the hallway outside her bedroom. Inside, a large symphonic gong hangs from a custom stand made for the space. The shimmering chandelier is by Ochre.

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“Scale and proportion are very important,” Munn says. “I make sure that the pieces that are selected are appropriate to the space.” That’s why she and her client ended up customizing most of the furnishings. After her client reviewed—and rejected—most retail options, Munn would often draw something on a piece of paper that ended up working better. She then had those drawings locally fabricated; the loveseats and chairs in the living room, along with the entertainment center, sectional and coffee table in the media room, and the client’s office desk and cabinetry are among the results.

“It was 100 percent a collaborative effort,” the owner says of the completed design, which truly reflects her new journey in life. “If I had the skill as a designer to create what I was envisioning, this is exactly what I would have created.” **L**



The master bedroom is dominated by a Venetian-plaster installation by Shelter Studios. Munn selected the low-profile bed from Ted Boerner and designed the low leather nightstands to reveal the artwork behind them. The lamps are by Porta Romana.