

Channeling FRED & GINGER

EVERY ROOM OF THIS CHIC CHASE PARK PLAZA CONDO HAS A DASH OF SHEEN, SPARKLE, AND 1930s SOPHISTICATION.

*By Christy Marshall
Photography by Alise O'Brien*

Ellen Curlee has both great style and an eye for design.

A photographer's representative for years and the eponymous owner of an art gallery (shuttered when the economy tanked in 2008), she and her husband, Durb, lived in modernist architect Harris Armstrong's former home in Oakland for 35 years. They weren't even thinking of selling—until a fateful Saturday afternoon they were out, driving an out-of-town guest around the city. Driving past the Chase, Ellen mentioned that if they ever moved, that was where she would want to go—a sentiment shared by many. The guest insisted that they check it out. They did.





The terrace runs the length of the apartment, and when the heat hasn't turned oppressive, the space houses a lovely garden. As a housewarming gift, Romeis and her husband, Jim, gave the Curlees balsa airplanes—which the two couples launched off the terrace.

Ellen designed the kitchen with her previous kitchen in mind. "There were a couple of things I wanted to do differently," she says. That included making the island larger, adding a deep single sink, and melding the granite on the island (from Global Granite & Marble) so it looks like it is wrapped from the leg.

HOW THEY GOT THE SHIMMER: Stainless-steel tiles cover the backsplashes.

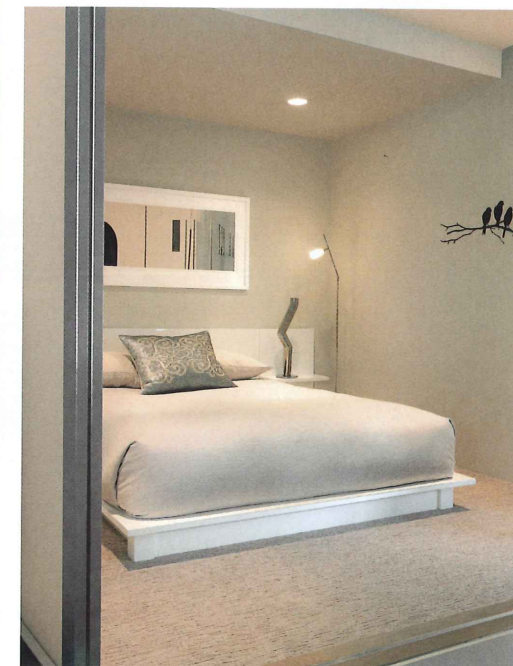


The Curlees wanted their own offices; to tie them together visually, Romeis commissioned Classic Wood working to create the millwork used throughout the apartment. Durb's space is first, bordered by the guest room, and then there's Ellen's office. The orange couch turns into a bed for visiting grandchildren.

HOW THEY GOT THE SHIMMER: Cohen designed the offices' lighting to highlight the space.

Another Cohen creation is the small suite for visitors. The suite's shoji doors are fronted with smoked glass for privacy and light. "It is kind of a loftette," Romeis says. "It's all a guest room needs."

HOW THEY GOT THE SHIMMER: The bed linens, pillow, and lighting all subtly shine.



The powder-room sconces came from Durb's childhood home. The floating vanity gives the sense of more space. The design: "A little shine, a little glam, some curves," Romeis says. "Knowing that, this makes sense."

HOW THEY GOT THE SHIMMER: They sprung for bedazzled wallpaper.

"We went back home and started talking about it, and we were thinking, 'Why not?'" Ellen says. "It was such a logical move for us at this stage of our lives."

They purchased one of the 2,500-square-foot units and immediately started making changes to accommodate their basic wish list: a master-bedroom suite, an office for each, and a guest suite. They called in architect Paul Doerner of the Lawrence Group; Santa Barbara, Calif., architect John Mike Cohen, a founder of St. Louis' Cohen Hilberry Architects; contractor Jeff Hochman of Chouteau Building Group; and interior designer Dana Romeis of Fibrations.

"It has taken a village to create this handsome residence," Romeis says.

The two architects met and discussed the design. "They had this fabulously interesting conversation about the fact that the space was very, very horizontal, and for it to look good, you had to emphasize the horizontal quality of the space," Ellen says. "You couldn't pretend to make it go high, because it couldn't go high."

The ceiling as originally planned by the Chase was built at different levels to accommodate the condo's mechanical innards, and it bothered Ellen. "The original ceiling was cacophonous, and I couldn't put my finger on how to fix it," she says. "[Cohen] came in and came up with this [wave ceiling]. Isn't it really great?"

Ellen's directions throughout were clear and concise.

"I wanted it contemporary, clean, open, and I was interested in making it flow for two people, but also to make it expand for a party," she says. "And I wanted it to feel shimmery. I wanted it to feel like Ginger and Fred. I wanted it to have that 1930s glamorous quality." ■



Ellen designed the master bath before Romeis came on board. The smoked-glass doors front an oversize linen closet.

HOW THEY GOT THE SHIMMER:
The lighting and reflections brighten the room.

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The master bed came from Design Within Reach; Romeis designed the headboard. The casings under the windows were built by Classic Woodworking. The chairs and table came from the Curlees' previous home. "I liked my furniture," Ellen says. "It was comfortable."

HOW THEY GOT THE SHIMMER:
They inset some additional lighting in the soffit above the bed.

