

AT HOME

Zen-inspired makeover takes condo from drab to inspirational

By Merlisa Lawrence Corbett
Special to *The Examiner*

Terry McManus once heard that Zen is the sound of one hand clapping — this was the ambiance he wanted to create in his Arlington condo.

With the help of Sherry Tyra, interior designer and owner of Custom Home Interior Creations, McManus converted a ho-hum apartment into an Asian-inspired retreat worthy of boisterous applause.

The most stunning element of McManus' condo is a wall of windows that flaunt a coveted view of the Washington Monument and U.S. Capitol. "Fourth of July was great," he said. "I wanted to ask the National Park Service if they could do fireworks every time I had guests over."

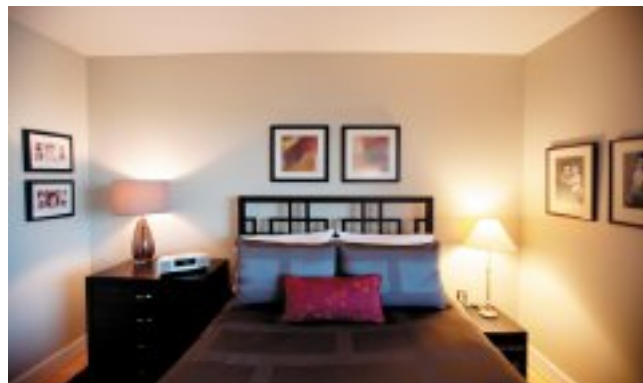
So stunning is the view that it dominates the living space. Yet a few choice decorating essentials create a cocoon of calm. A bold yet comfy garnet-colored Petrie Apartment Sofa draws the eyes away from the view. This 1960s-style favorite features tufted and buttoned cushions and tapered hardwood legs. The sofa provides rich contrast to a pair of soft gray microsuède swivel chairs parked in front of the windows.

The chairs were held over from the time when the entire apartment was gray and white. The bland palette reflected the condo's use as a commuter home for two years when McManus maintained his primary residence in Hilton Head, S.C.

"We were trying to change his place from looking like an upscale hotel room into a home," Tyra said. "We wanted to give it more warmth so that when someone walked into his home, it felt inviting."

The living room walls do that with a coat of Benjamin Moore's Montgomerie White, a soft, buttery off-white. This is a quiet background for a bold red cornice with leaf print that draws attention both from and to the splendid red sofa.

Two cubes from the top of an Ascend Mahogany modular shelving system serve as a base for a glass-top cocktail table. This espresso-stained wood, found on accent pieces throughout, helps balance the richly colored upholstery, while a Dale Tiffany lamp with a satin gray lampshade adds a little glamour.



Just off the living room is a home office with walls painted a pastel army green (Camouflage, also from Benjamin Moore). It complements a custom-made ruby red rug that duplicates the pattern of leaves on the cornice. Two large U.S. maps are framed and hung in the office. A map lover, McManus had the posters attached to the wall before, but Tyra said adding the frames created a more finished look.

In the master bedroom is a solid-wood, chocolate-colored headboard of overlapping squares purchased from West Elm. Above the headboard is a pair of Zen-themed pictures that Tyra picked up at a Home Goods store. A designer for Home and Garden Television's "Designed to Sell," Tyra said she often combed retail shops for accents and accessories. Tyra also is a member of the Designers Network in Columbia, Md., which matches clients with designers.

Personalizing the space, McManus placed two photos on the wall, which at first glance look like mirror images. A closer look reveals portraits of McManus, at age 5, being held by his father in 1950. The other portrait is of McManus, at age 36, holding his son, age 5, in 1981. "It's one of my fondest possessions," said McManus.

Two apartment-grade bathrooms



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PHOTOS BY ANDREW HARNIK/EXAMINER

were enlivened with black galaxy granite countertops and glamorous wall light fixtures of clear opal glass offset by dangling diamond crystal-

studded accents. The gold specks in the black granite seem to twinkle as light bounces from the bathroom mirrors to the sparkling fixtures.

Sherry Tyra's style tips:

1. Add color to white walls. Tyra's favorite: Benjamin Moore HC-98 Providence Olive. "We've used that color more than any other on 'Designed to Sell.'"

2. Cover floors with plush rugs. Tyra likes to use ProSource (prosourcefloors.com), a floor supplier in Old Town Alexandria that allows you to create your own prints to make custom carpets.

3. Soften the scene with window treatments. Even a cornice or valance can add warmth to stark windows.

4. Hang artwork. This doesn't have to be expensive. In the case of Terry McManus' condo, Tyra framed wall maps he already had, giving his home office a warmer feel.

5. Accessorize. Tyra recommends using accessories to emphasize a theme. In the McManus condo, she chose a metal bowl with the same ginkgo leaf pattern as the window treatments. She continued this theme in the pattern of the office rug. Tyra often uses lampsplus.com for finding interesting light fixtures.



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