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# URBAN NIRVANA

AFTER DECADES IN THEIR TRADITIONAL EASTOVER HOME, ONE COUPLE PURCHASES AN UPTOWN CONDO IDEAL FOR SHOWCASING THEIR IMPRESSIVE ART COLLECTION.

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In the living room, the Belgian high-lacquer coffee table inlaid with engraved brass and agate, along with the branch-like brass and hand-blown glass chandelier, add the perfect balance to the homeowners' existing antiques. The artwork above the fireplace is by Russ Warren.





The large painting of three brothers by Chinese artist Chen Yifei was the perfect piece for the dramatic dining room. The room features a dining table with a patina bronze table base with hand-polished gold interior designed by Jiun Ho with dining chairs by Jessica Charles. The pendant light, by Aqua Creations, was made from crushed silk on a metal frame.



CLAY AND DEIDRE GRUBB KNEW it was time. The couple had lived in their 6,000-square-foot Georgian home in Eastover for fifteen years with their two children, who were now grown. The Grubbs wanted to move full-time to their lake home in Salisbury, but they also wanted a home base in Charlotte where they could stay connected with their close friends, their work, and activities they'd come to love in the Queen City. "Clay had always said he wanted to live Uptown in a condo," Deidre Grubb says. "And so it seemed as good a time as any to make that move."

The Grubbs landed on a spacious 3,000-square-foot condo in the Trust building on Tryon Street in the heart of Uptown. The condo, which was previously owned by singer Chris Daughtry, had everything the Grubbs were looking for in an urban home base: an array of entertaining areas, beautiful city views, and, most importantly, plenty of wall space to accommodate the couple's growing art collection. "That really was the number one priority for us when we bought the home," explains Grubb of the wall space. "We started collecting art on our honeymoon," she shares. "And over the years, our tastes have shifted, but we've continued collecting." Though half



the size of their Eastover home, the Trust condo ironically boasted more room to display their art collection. It was, however, going to be a challenge to figure out how to curate the right coupling of paintings and sculptures to create the elevated aesthetic they wanted in their new home.

Without hesitation, Grubb reached out to her longtime friend and designer Aida Saul to help with the interior design. “The objective from day one was to display their art properly,” says Saul of the collection, which ranges from contemporary paintings to large sculptures and abstract installations.

Aesthetically, the condo needed minor updates—a fresh coat of paint, an Ipe wood overlay on the outdoor patio, a wallpaper addition here and there, and an updated powder

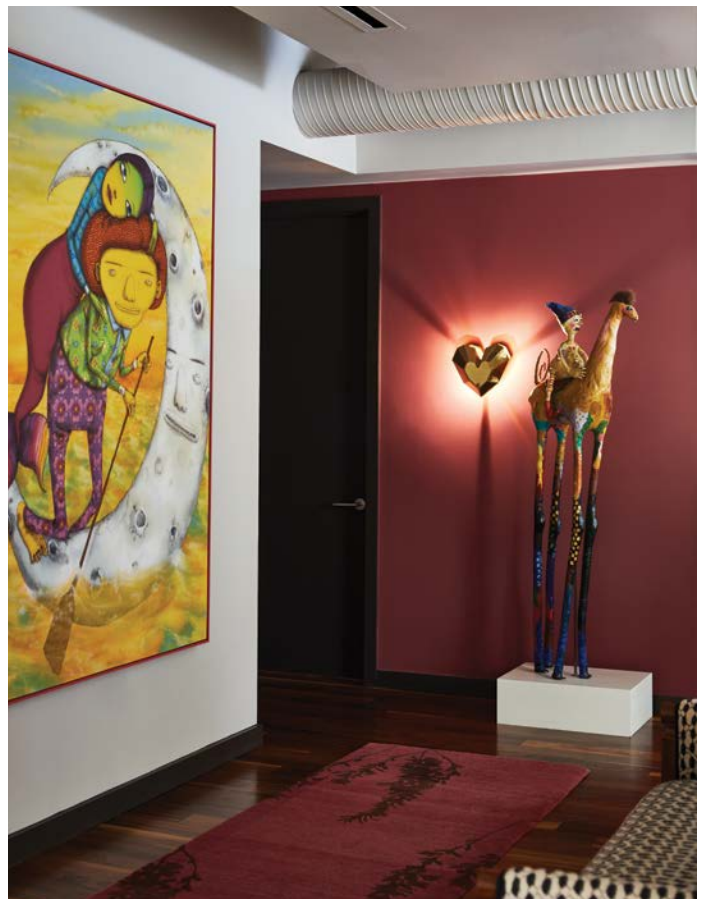
room. “Their Eastover home was a little more traditional, well-appointed with a lot of antiques, but their artwork was their signature look; it’s their voice,” Saul explains. “They wanted to go a bit more modern with this space, but I also wanted to incorporate a little fun and whimsy. My objective was not to get rid of all of their antiques. I like history and love to see old things mixed with new and how that creates beautiful contrast and tension between elements. It speaks to how you collect and evolve—you don’t erase your history.” Unlike their previous home, where the artwork was secondary to the interior design, the art would be the driving force for all interior design decisions, influencing everything from the fabrics and wallcoverings to the furniture and lighting.



**LEFT:** To seamlessly connect the outdoor living with the indoor, Saul replaced the existing tile flooring on the terrace with Ipe wood floors, stained the color of the living room floors, unifying the two spaces. The black-base Saarinen tulip stool in red vinyl is from Design Within Reach, and the sofa is from Summer Classics.



**TOP:** After a renovation by Andrew Roby, the powder room was given a colorful makeover with a whimsical comic-strip wallcovering by artist Greg Gossel. The custom-designed vanity by Saul and the pendant by Kelly Wearstler complement the bold walls.



**BOTTOM:** The foyer's main purpose is to announce to visitors the homeowners' love of art. A heart-shaped brass wall sconce from 1stDibs creates ambient lighting while also serving as artwork. The painting is by Os Gemeos.



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For Saul, choosing pieces that spoke to and complemented each other when placed together in one space was a delicate dance. “They have X number of pieces, and trying to find the right location for everything was definitely a challenge,” Saul says. “We had to make sure they were comfortable with those pieces in the specific locations but also take into account how the artwork interacts with other pieces in that space.”

Much of the tweaking also meant layering antique and vintage pieces to enhance the art and produce the elevated, urban aesthetic that the Grubbs were looking for. “The dining room is a perfect example of this approach,” says Saul of the two large paintings by noted Chinese artist Chen Yifei, which informed the colors and the mood of the room. Saul added the Art Deco buffet and a cast bronze dining table to continue with the theme of mixing antiques and gallery furnishings.

The owner’s suite also exemplifies combining old with new. The gray Lucy Cope crystal lamps atop antique Louis XVI French nightstands, paired with the large Maud Gatewood painting in tones of red and rose and dominant hues of green and blue, make the space feel instantly elegant. “We wanted the room to feel warm and luxurious with the use of elevated materials, so I chose a metallic embroidered fabric wallpaper by Pierre Frey in a blush tone to complement the color of the bed and also because everyone looks great in this color,” she laughs.

Interestingly, nearly every piece of art that was in their former home seamlessly transitioned to their condo despite the downsizing in square footage. “In our last house, we had one painting per room, and it was beautiful,” Grubb says. “But here, we have multiple

**ABOVE:** The foyer features a whimsical sculptural robot from Prada. “I was on the showroom floor at the SoHo location and saw this robot and just had to have it,” the homeowner says. The Biedermeier settee was updated and recovered in Fortuny fabric.

**OPPOSITE:** The breakfast nook originally had a custom banquette, which Saul removed and replaced with a midcentury-modern expandable teak table with brass leg banding from 1stDibs. “It was important to have the flexibility of seating a large group for casual dinners but still feel intimate enough for two,” she explains. The solid mahogany Art Deco armchairs, designed by Gaston Poisson and covered in sheepskin, are ideal for lingering.

The primary bedroom's custom forest-green velvet bed was the inspiration for the room's design. The wallcovering is a metallic embroidered fabric by Pierre Frey. A Missoni fabric lumbar pillow sits atop the bed, flanked by antique Louis XVI French nightstands. **OPPOSITE:** The primary bedroom features an array of antiques, artwork, and modern pieces like the leather Barcelona chair from Design Within Reach. The terra-cotta figurines on the adjacent table are from the Tang Dynasty.





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—AIDA SAUL

pieces in one space, and it just works so beautifully together. I love having it all together because it feels more like an art gallery. I’ll have friends who had been to our Eastover home dozens of times ask me where we got a new painting, and I’ll tell them we’ve always had it. By simply changing the setting and coupling it with other pieces, the art takes on a new life.”

With its city setting and gallery-like feel, the condo remains one of the couple’s favorite places to come home to. While they spend quite a bit of time at their lake home and in Venice, California, where one of their daughters now lives, they still love to come back to their Uptown loft and host friends and family for cocktails and candlelit dinners with the Queen City skyline as the backdrop. “It’s really a special home for us,” Grubb says. “And our art collection is really what makes it so special.” ♦