

A glass sculpture by Stephen Rolfe Powell is artfully displayed on an illuminated pedestal created by the master craftsmen in the Bittners woodworking shop.



A FRESH START

An unfinished Cherokee Park condominium becomes a beautiful canvas under the discerning eye of interior designer Libby Rush of Bittners.

Written by Bridget Williams / Photography by Rachel Lutz / Andrew Kung Group

A chance meeting with a friend shortly after deciding to consolidate their two separate households into one led Barbara Nichols and Tom Musselman to a fortuitous find: the last unfinished condominium in a coveted Cherokee Park-front building. Excited and slightly daunted by the prospect of a truly blank slate, Barbara turned to friend and interior designer Libby Rush of Bittners, her trusted decorating collaborator for nearly four decades. Studio A Architecture and Wes Johnson of WesCott Construction rounded out the team that brought the project to fruition.

While the unit was still an unfinished shell, several preexisting parameters were non-negotiable, including the plumbing and the location of two fireplaces. "Being sandwiched between two already finished floors certainly presented a few challenges," explained Libby. Not having a freight elevator was also a hurdle, forcing the team to be creative in moving raw materials while not being too much of an inconvenience to the building's other occupants. Oversized goods and large pieces of furniture entered the unit through the doors of a rear terrace via crane.

One of two seating areas in the formal living room is bookended on one side by custom built-ins. Rug from Anabel's Oriental Rugs.



The television in the family room can be raised to provide access to the aquarium.



The elevator opens directly into the foyer of the home, which comprises an entire floor of the building. Libby wasted no time in making a statement, dressing the wall opposite the elevator in antiqued mirror panels that cleverly conceal storage closets. Barbara selected several significant pieces of antique furniture to make the move with her, and Libby used these to help inform the design.

The organic print of the Jim Thompson wallpaper in the foyer is echoed in a vignette staged atop an antique console table: a contemporary gold Ginkgo leaf sculpture branches out from behind a Baccarat panther. The X-pattern on the double doors leading into the heart of the home is a design element borrowed from Tom's previous residence. A soothing, muted color palette predominates, with contrast color on the trim work serving as an impactful design element.

Stepping inside, the eye is immediately drawn to the living room's large windows, which provide treetop views of Cherokee Park. Enhancing the already idyllic scene is a piece of art glass by Stephen Rolfe Powell. The master craftsmen in the Bittners

woodworking shop created the illuminated pedestal on which it rests from exquisite waterfall bubinga wood.

Libby remarked that the layout of the living room, which is dissected by pathways leading to the various parts of the residence, presented a challenge when deciding on furniture placement. Using inspiration from the ground up, she layered newly acquired rugs from Anabel's Oriental Rugs atop the highly polished marble floors in each of the two seating areas in the barrel-vaulted space. Crowning each is a multi-arm contemporary gold chandelier that serves as an excellent foil to the antique pieces present. Bookending one of the seating areas is an antique credenza and a wall of custom walnut built-ins.

While Barbara took the lead for the design process, Tom had a few specific requests: a designated bar, a putting green, an aquarium, and at least one room painted Tuscan red. Libby aptly accommodated all of them. A wet bar tucked into an antechamber of the living room doubles as a trophy room. The numerous awards and accolades on display are a testament to Tom's prowess as a devoted lifelong golfer.

A pair of large terraces at the front of the building overlook Cherokee Park.





The range hood provided the starting point for the design of the kitchen. The custom wood top for the island, created by the Bittners woodworking shop, was delivered through the terrace doors via crane.



A dressage-inspired chandelier designed by Suzanne Kasler for Visual Comfort hangs above an oval dining table created in the Bittners woodworking studio.



The Bittners woodworking shop created the pedestal supports for the glass-topped dining table.



A mosaic tile accent wall is a defining feature of the spa-like master bathroom.



The luxury of five terraces allowed for one of them to become a putting green.

The kitchen, family room, and dining room function as one cohesive space, which Barbara says makes large-scale entertaining a breeze. Reflecting the area's more relaxed feel, the flooring transitions from polished stone to wood, and there is a more pronounced use of pattern on the upholstery and rugs. Uniquely positioned beneath the television within the built-in cabinetry in the family room is a long and narrow aquarium. The Bittners woodworking shop created the pedestal supports for the glass-topped dining table, the wood top for the kitchen island, and an oval table for a banquette located in a cozy alcove.

Tom's request for a putting green may seem to be a tall order for high-rise condominium living, but the luxury of five terraces made it possible to construct one on the terrace accessed from the kitchen. "All of my stress goes away when I'm out there," said

Tom. Barbara says that a near-constant breeze allows for year-round enjoyment of the two terraces at the front of the unit that overlooks Cherokee Park, even at the height of summer. "It really feels like you are living in a treehouse," she added.

The 4,000-square-foot condominium boasts a pair of bedroom suites, which allowed Tom and Barbara to each customize a bathroom and closet to their specifications. His is painted Tuscan red, while her bathroom and closet are decidedly more feminine. In Barbara's bathroom, delicate mosaic tile dresses up the wall behind the soaking tub.

With several months of construction now in their rear-view, Barbara and Tom have happily settled into the ease of condominium living. "We just love it here," said Barbara. "Neither of us miss our old houses." **sl**

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