

WHITE NOISE

Architect Frank Pierce's Old Louisville home is a beautiful study in the power of artful restraint.

Written by Bridget Williams / Photos by Robert Burge

"I have said that black has it all. White too. Their beauty is absolute. It is the perfect harmony." — *Coco Chanel*.

Always detail-oriented for as long as he can remember, Frank Pierce knew he wanted to be an architect from an early age, but not because he was the kind of child who was always tinkering with Legos or Lincoln Logs. "In sixth grade, my best friend's father was an architect, and they had what I thought was a cool house and fancy cars, and I wanted to emulate their lifestyle," he explained. A native Texan, after graduating from the architecture school at Texas Tech University, Pierce moved to Louisville and hung out his shingle as a solo practitioner in 1991.

Raised in a family deeply immersed in scientific pursuits, Pierce said he didn't have a formal education in the arts but has always appreciated the satisfaction he finds in symmetry. He credits exposure to the scientific method with his systematic approach to architecture and the ability to achieve balance regardless if the structure is traditional or modern. "I think Frank sees the paper before the pencil," said Douglas Riddle, CEO of Bittners, who has worked with Pierce for decades. "In design, it is the simplicity that is the most rewarding element to achieve. The practice of restraint is the most challenging and the most successful".

Interestingly, when he's designing, Pierce said he conceives a structure purely in black and white and sometimes finds it jarring when he sees the completed project full of color. "For me, color is chaotic, and stripping that away is soothing," he explained.

The embodiment of Pierce's ethos is his personal residence at the Central Park Lofts in Old Louisville, where he moved "temporarily" nine years ago. Constructed in the 1950s as an office building, Pierce was literally drawn to the light: 65 feet of running windows in the 1,200-square-foot space. Twelve-plus foot ceilings add an expansive aspect, with exposed ductwork and a polished concrete floor and ceiling lending a slight industrial edge. Pierce, working in concert with Riddle, a colleague and a friend, has executed a master class in restraint, largely eschewing color in favor of judicious use of wood tones found in an array of eclectic furnishings spanning multiple decades.

A vignette in the living room finds a Hickory Chair mirror surmounting a vintage table wrapped in worn black leather. Atop the table are a pair of tall Danish midcentury lamps; beneath is a black-and-white ottoman from Lee Industries. A painted sisal rug is nearly indiscernible from the polished concrete floor.

Bric-à-brac is banished, and every detail down to the cocktail table-scape receives scrupulous scrutiny. Allowing color to "live" outside the expanse of windows freed Pierce to focus on selecting pieces and finishes with unique sculptural or tactile appeal. Even Buddy, the docile retired Greyhound he rescued, is in keeping with the color scheme.

A vignette in the living room is comprised of a Hickory Chair mirror, Danish midcentury modern lamps, vintage leather-wrapped table, Lee Industries ottoman and Kelly Wearstler accent pillows on the armchairs.



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Pierce conceded to color in the television room via the spines of carefully configured books. The suede-wrapped desk with nailhead trim is a custom piece made by Bittners.



Even Pierce's rescue dog Buddy is on board with the color scheme.

In the living room, Biedermeier chairs with Edelman cashmere calf leather flank a tree trunk table made by Andrew Marsh. Artist David Mahoney is credited with the room's steel and glass coffee table. Pierce admires the exposed architecture of a Panton-like bent plywood chair by Roberta Schillings. Similar wood tones appear in the nearby Biedermeier bench, dressed with shaggy Mongolian wool accent pillows. Serving as an homage to the Lone Star State, a pair of diamondback rattlesnake skins, mounted by Nick Boone of Leatherhead, adorn the wall near the ebony Baldwin parlor grand piano.

Pierce conceded to color in the television room via the spines of carefully arranged tomes. The artisans at the Bittners woodworking shop crafted the desk, which is enveloped in sumptuous cream suede and accented with antique nailhead trim.

Complete restraint rules in the primary bedroom, designed with monk-like austerity and completely white from floor to ceiling. A large-scale undulating canvas artwork created by Pierce softens the boxy predominance.

Pierce's gravitation to the harmony he finds in achromatism has created a cocoon-like oasis amid an urban jungle. [sl](#)