

A PIED-À-TERRE NESTLED IN CHEROKEE PARK

Douglas Riddle applies his exacting eye to a Louisville abode
perched high above the Olmsted-designed Park.

Written by Bridget Williams / Photography by Robert Burge


There's an honesty in design stripped of extraneous colors, where the subtleties of existence become more pronounced. The eyes are free to ponder the nuance of light and shadow rather than process a preponderance of pattern and color. Working within this restrained palette requires a trained eye to add depth and dimensionality amid the simplicity. Time and again, Douglas Riddle, President & COO of Bittners, has demonstrated his prowess with monochromatic interiors, imbuing them with timeless classicism and evoking feelings of welcoming calm.

Riddle met his minimalist match in clients Natalie and Dana Christensen. Kentucky natives and psychotherapists, the couple had been living in Santa Fe for the past decade when they decided to acquire a pied-à-terre in the 1400 Willow building to split time between the two cities. Natalie said she had seen images of Riddle's former home in the nearby Dartmouth building and "became obsessed" with capturing the essence of that design in their Louisville home. She reached out to Bittners, planning to show a designer the photos as inspiration, when she connected with Douglas, and the duo became fast friends, bonding over their affinity for Santa Fe. "It was so much fun collaborating with Douglas," said Natalie.

In her youth, Natalie had set her sights on becoming an artist and discovered that Santa Fe's landscape and architecture ignited her long latent dream. She began taking photos with her iPhone and then a camera, focusing her lens on "more banal suburban landscapes to draw attention to the drama that is missed." Within a year of acquiring her first professional camera, she was selected as one of 100 photographers for the Santa Fe Photo Festival. Today, Natalie's photographs are found in private collections and galleries around the globe (the Bittners showroom on Main Street has several of Natalie's pieces on display).

The restrained elegance of the couple's Louisville apartment is ideally suited to Natalie's moody abstract works, with Douglas remarking that one photograph, printed on aluminum dibond and displayed in the living room, "comes alive in the softer evening light." The existing floorplan was unchanged, with Esposito Construction tasked with adding elegant trim work and new ebony-hued wood floors.

"It took discipline to start from scratch," remarked Natalie, who worked with Douglas to select textiles, Santa Clara pottery, and artwork created by artisans in Santa Fe. Douglas combined these with handsome mid-century-inspired furnishings and bespoke Bittners-made pieces to impart the timeless luxury of a high-end hotel suite.

"Douglas 'got us' right from the get-go, and his first presentation was spot-on," said Natalie, who added that it feels good to have Cherokee Park in their "front yard" after living in the desert for so long. "It's a perfect lifestyle contrast; we love being in the center of a vibrant community in the building and just outside the windows." 

An iconic Eero Saarinen dining table from Knoll is surrounded by mid-century Erik Buch rosewood chairs and teak chairs from Noir Furniture. Tom Dixon pendant. The large-scale encaustic painting is by Santa Fe-based artist J.E. Boc. Vintage San Ildefonso Pueblo Pottery on the table.





A pair of loveseats from Baker are accented with Osborne and Little pillows in the living room. An 18th-century French mirror surmounts the fireplace. Custom silk and wool rug from Rug & Kilim. Thayer Coggin accent chairs and Cesare Lacca coffee table.



Bistro chairs in the living room are from the John Reeves Design/Bittners Studio Collection.



Classic Finishes was tasked with creating the black Venetian plaster floor-to-ceiling finish in the entry. Moving through the space into the light-filled living room, with its bank of windows framing the treetops, creates a dramatic sense of arrival. Holly Hunt pendant light. Bittners-made console table. Runner from Rug & Kilim.

A textural hand-knotted Zimba rug from Schumacher anchors the seating area in the den, comprised of a Thayer Coggin sofa, a hand-forged iron-frame chair from Arteriors Home with Pollack upholstery, and a Lee Industries swivel chair with Holly Hunt upholstery. A vintage Navajo blanket is draped over a woven bench from Century Furniture. Photograph by Natalie Christensen.

A mirror from Jonathan Charles surmounts a handsome mid-century sideboard in the dining room.



In the breakfast room, a pair of Saarinen Tulip chairs are pulled up to a vintage French industrial metal desk from the 1920s. Photograph by Natalie Christensen and pottery by Zuni Pueblo contemporary artist Alan E. Lasiloo.



A study in serenity, the Hickory Chair bed is flanked by nightstands from Global Views. The white hair on hide Art Deco-inspired bench is from Arteriors Home. Drawings by Rebecca Venn, Elkio Oriental rug, Calvin Fabrics drapery.