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REALTOR SAM SALADINO + HOW TO REDO
A RANCH HOUSE + THE MERGER: ONE APARTMENT
FROM TWO + MAKING UP WITH MARY KAY

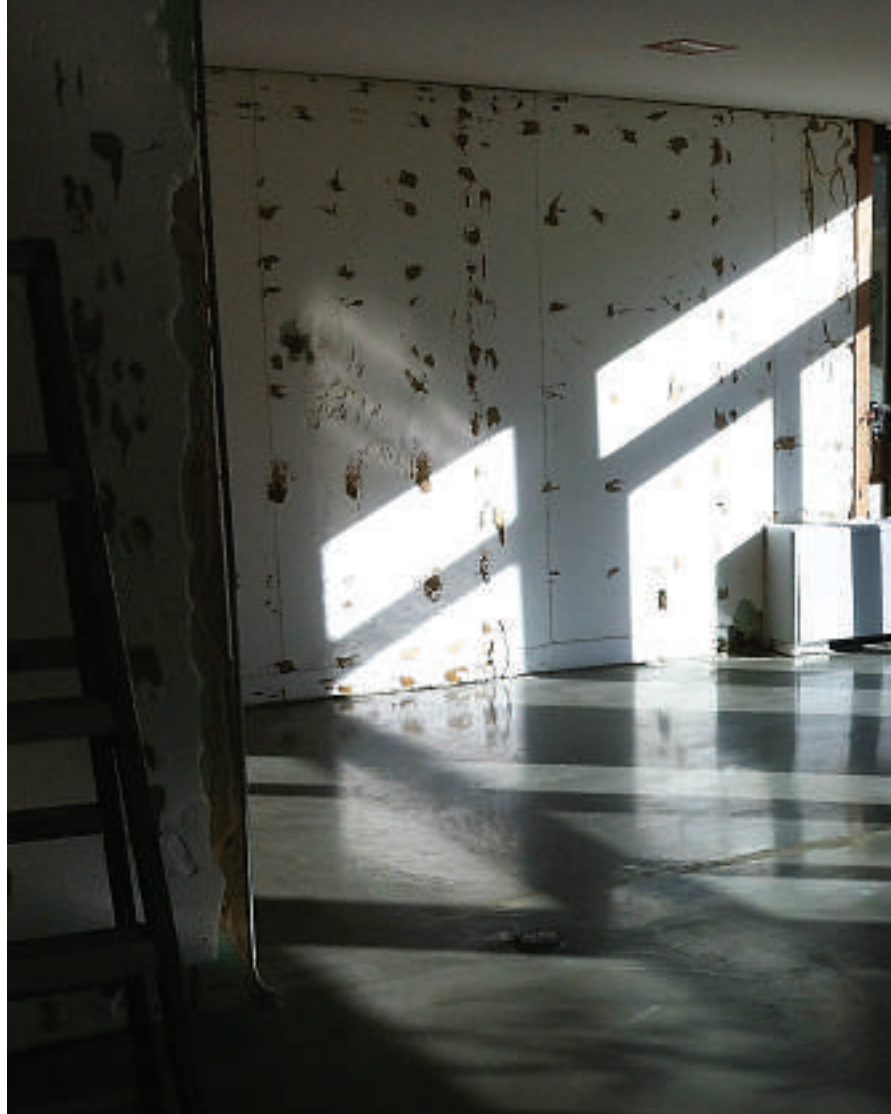
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THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

A BASEMENT APARTMENT'S
SLEEK BUT SUMPTUOUS AIR
BELIES ITS DERELICT PAST

by MARIANA GREENE
photographs by
STEPHEN KARLISCH





PHOTOGRAPHS THIS SPREAD: COURTESY STEVEN HAUSER

A

h, the irony in preferring the amenities of a high-rise building but living on its lowest level. Kimberley and Ken Gordon say their home's altitude matters not when there is round-the-clock security, no dragging garbage carts to the curb, no lawn to mow, a pool without the maintenance, a handyman crew on call, gracious concierges and a parkland view. Thanks to the imagination and insight of Kimberley's longtime go-to design duo, Dallas designers Alice Cottrell and Rick Rozas, the Gordons are living the high life in luxurious simplicity at 21 Turtle Creek, a venerable, skyscraping fixture along the treed and winding boulevard.

Kimberley has lived in five residences Cottrell and Rozas have outfitted for her. By now, she blindly trusts their design decisions on her behalf. "I could buy a place and leave for a year, and I would be comfortable with whatever they did," she says. Ken, on the other hand, was wary: Knowing his wife as well as they do, would the designers give him an equal hearing? "People need to have a home together," Cottrell says, explaining that Ken lived in his bride's former townhouse for four years. "I wanted to be a part of creating a home for them as a couple."

OPPOSITE After 20 years furnishing hotels, including Donald Trump properties, Dallas designer Alice Cottrell has come to rely on commercial fabrics for residential use. In Kimberley and Ken Gordon's living room on the lower level of the 21 Turtle Creek high-rise — two small apartments were merged to make an 1,800-square-foot residence — the 11-foot sofa, a custom design by Fort Worth's Kisabeth Furniture, is upholstered in a plush but stain-resistant textile. The custom coffee table with black glass was manufactured by Murray's Iron Works.







LEFT Designer Rick Rozas, who frequently collaborates with Alice Cottrell, devised the kitchen to maximize every square inch. "Ken is an abusive cook," Rozas says, "meaning he uses his kitchen." Countertops are natural quartz, which is harder than granite and won't show the effects of the oenophile owner's wine tastings or the grandchildren's spills. Contractor Steven Hauser built the cabinets of paint-grade plywood. ABOVE One of Ken Gordon's stipulations was space for his wine collection and bar accoutrements.

THE PROJECT WAS ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT. IN ADDITION TO SEVERE STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS AND DECADES OF LEAKS AND DETERIORATION, "IT WAS JUST DISGUSTING," SAYS DESIGNER RICK ROZAS.



“I had some hard-and-fast rules about masculine touches,” says Ken, an entrepreneur who sells packaging to the nation’s restaurant industry. “I need a very, very good office, a good kitchen and a place to store my wine collection.” He also was adamant about the apartment’s color scheme: “neutral, masculine, not over-the-top.” It was Cottrell, already a resident of the building, who suggested the basement spaces, two small apartments, to the couple. She was undaunted by the warren of tiny rooms and 50 years of plumbing leaks. The designer had confidence in her frequent collaborator Rozas that he could secure the leaks and reinvent the snug spaces into an enjoyable home that catered to the couple’s peripatetic lifestyle. “We ripped out every single thing to get the apartment all tightened up,” Cottrell says. “The biggest restraint in working in a high-rise is the plumbing. You can’t move it. Baths are small at 21 because of the building’s era, but Rick did an amazing job of maxing out the apartment.” (“I like to outfit spaces to use every square inch, like on a ship,” Rozas says.)

In spite of Rozas’ own confidence in his problem-solving abilities, he acknowledges the project was especially difficult. In addition to severe structural problems and decades of leaks and deterioration, “it was just disgusting” when he accompanied the clients for their first look. “Ken was, like, ‘Are you kidding? I’ll wait for you outside.’” Kimberley asked Rozas, “Will I be happy here?” The designers confidently answered yes. The unit is inherently blessed with walls of glass on one side that open to the outside and the building’s mature, green, rolling landscape. The units on the lower level of 21 also have, as perhaps a gift from its architect to the dwellers in them, notably higher ceilings than all 20-plus floors above them.

First, Rozas conceived of a sleek kitchen — now a smashing spectacle of white and natural quartz — a dining area for six and a living room as one expansive space. The first impression is of light, simplicity and serenity. Private rooms, such as bedrooms, baths and office, are small by today’s supersize standards, but they, too, feel airy because of their visual sparseness. Claustrophobia does not enter the picture here. (The unsung hero of the terrace apartment? Contractor Steven Hauser. He built custom cabinets in every room and pocket doors, as well as handling Rozas’ detailed requests. “He’s intense,” says Ken, the reformed skeptic. “He’s not a typical contractor. He’s an artist.”)

Rozas and Cottrell are happy to share their bag of tricks. Mirror, glass and reflective surfaces are a given; so are shades of white. But this is not the home of an ice princess. Cottrell uses Kimberley’s contemporary art collection to provide color and employs commercial textiles in textured neutrals

ABOVE Ken and Kimberley Gordon, who love high-rise living even though their apartment is below ground level. RIGHT Rooms are deliberately low-key to showcase Kimberley’s art collection, including a commissioned work by Marcelyn McNeil of Houston, represented in Dallas by Conduit Gallery. Rozas remade the couple’s Eero Saarinen dining table with a larger-than-usual pecan top for big dinner parties.





RICK ROZAS AND ALICE COTTRELL ARE HAPPY TO SHARE THEIR BAG OF TRICKS: MIRROR, GLASS AND REFLECTIVE SURFACES; COMMERCIAL TEXTILES IN TEXTURED NEUTRALS; AND POCKET DOORS, “SO THERE IS NO DOOR HELL,” SAYS ROZAS.

OPPOSITE A glass shower and white Thassos marble, the color of refined pure-cane sugar, keep the compact master bath from feeling claustrophobic. BELOW No matter a project’s style, Cottrell likes to incorporate a few vintage or antique furnishings. In the master bedroom, a Radiator Bed by Stanley Jay Friedman for Brueton came from Again & Again in the Dallas Design District. Wintertree wallpaper by Jack Lenor Larsen provides the dreamy backdrop.



to add substance. Rozas insists on the aforementioned pocket doors where possible: “Giant, double pocket doors in really little rooms. I put pocket doors everywhere so there is no door hell.” (And these doors were machined by Hauser, a master, as Ken demonstrates. There is no grimacing and tugging at recalcitrant, flimsy wood panels along a stubborn metal track. These doors glide smoothly and silently out of sight.) Another key, Rozas says, are storage spaces in almost every room, wherever an inch can be commandeered. They are faced with paint-quality plywood panels, sans hardware or finger slots, to keep the surfaces streamlined. It is a small detail with big impact. HVAC registers are roomwide slits in ceilings, not clunky grilles. Floors are the building’s original concrete, but the designers had them ground down to show the aggregate’s earthy ingredients, now polished to a shimmer. Texture plays a deceptive role in Cottrell’s choice of upholstery fabrics. The Houston-born designer began her career in New York, working for the contract-interiors firm associated with Donald Trump’s hotel division. There, she learned the value of commercial-grade textiles. “A lot of fabrics I use are outdoor fabrics,” Cottrell says. “You can use Formula 409 on them if there are spills or sticky fingers.” Manmade contract textiles, she adds, can be soft and plush without the luxury price tag of natural fibers. One that wraps a bed’s head- and footboard has a pearlized shimmer: It is vinyl. Another looks like a barnacled Pacific boulder, but is soft and suedelike. Living-room seating upholstery looks and feels like salt-and-pepper chenille, yet Cottrell chose it to endure a cherished pup, visits from an adored toddler granddaughter and the potential for red-wine mishaps that goes with an oenophile’s frequent guests.

On a Saturday afternoon in July, with the heat peaking outside, the Gordons loll on a sofa surrounded by cool colors, with glassy concrete underfoot. Something, though, is missing. It’s that bugaboo of apartment living: noise. More praise from Ken for the team: “It’s the acoustic dry-wall Rick used, QuietRock. You can’t hear a thing. It’s quiet here. It’s very quiet.” Says Kimberley: “There’s a party going on right now next door with about 30 people, and there is a big party at the pool.” Everyone in the room strains, only to hear the sound of silence. It is the ultimate luxury.

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OPPOSITE Kimberley requested a custom rotating stand for *Encrusted Elizabeth*, a sculpture by Albuquerque mixed-media artist Kathie Olivas. At the end of the hall is a watercolor by Tim Biskup of Los Angeles, a lowbrow artist who is collected internationally. The design team ordered the building’s original floors ground down until the concrete’s gravel particles appeared.

