

Clean lines and Bauhaus-inspired furniture accent the Ewald family's corner condo in Boston.



tailor-made



A downtown space fits an urban family to a T.

BY *erin byers murray* // PHOTOGRAPHS BY *kent dayton*

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Architect David Stern's greatest compliment came from a family friend, an eccentric painter and poet for whom he had designed a house in Truro. The project was built as a multitude of tiny enclaves, and was meant for use as a studio, hideaway, and home. "This house fits me like my skin," she said once it was complete.

For Stern and his wife/partner, interior designer Diane McCafferty, fitting a client's needs is the essence of their work. The two met while working at Schwartz/Silver Architects 15 years ago. Since then, they've launched their own firm, married, had a child, and settled in the South End. But while the couple's background is in institutional work, Stern says, "we've really become house experts."

Nowhere is this more evident than in clients Negin and Oliver Ewald's home. Watching Negin move through her 22nd-floor, 3,000-square-foot condo in Boston's Ritz-Carlton Towers, it's clear that Stern and McCafferty are masters at tweaking urban spaces to fit a family. The duo transformed what had been a vacant model unit into an uncluttered, efficient condo that suits Negin, her art-collecting husband, and their two children just so.

Negin's bohemian-chic aesthetic is reflected in the open floor plan and modern-vintage Bauhaus furniture. Her husband, Oliver, she explains, has a German's penchant for clean lines, minimalist construction, and, more than anything, "no clutter," she says.

It was with those clear instructions that Negin approached the design duo when she and her husband bought the condominium (they'd been renting a unit down the hall). Though she'd never worked with an architect or designer, Negin



quickly learned the upside. "I used to think, Why do people hire interior designers? It's your taste, right? You go out, you buy stuff," she says. But after meeting Stern and McCafferty, "I could see the value right away. David and Diane worked well together. She has a good sense of space and how to use it. Their work is so intertwined."

In fact, the designers' partnership is key to their success. McCafferty is not a decorator, Stern insists: She approaches a space like an architect. The two will sometimes scheme up a new project separately, and then choose the stronger concept. McCafferty usually wins, Stern admits. "I'm busy thinking of how I'm going to build it as I design, while Diane tends to come to clarity more quickly," he says.

McCafferty describes their process by weaving her arms loosely upward, pantomiming a DNA strand. "We just know when the other comes in and the other backs out, so we're always working together in a parallel way and then we overlap," she says.

For the Ewalds' unit, the pair started by widening and shifting the entrance to the living room, which gave the dining room an extra wall for privacy. They then combined a library and second bedroom to create a three-part children's area—a playroom flanked by two bedrooms. The result is a camplike play space that can transition into more-private quarters as the children grow. They also removed a closet to make room for an office and renovated a guest room in the back, replacing a fixed wall with a large sliding door system so that it doubles as a family room with a pull-out sofa.

At Oliver's request, the couple installed a separate media space in the living room. With McCafferty's guidance, Stern designed a white-paneled floating wall supported by slender stainless steel rods, which hide the wires behind the wall while defining the area. Behind it, a gray modular floating wall supported by Living Divani can be repositioned to accommodate various seating arrangements around three metal "clip

From top, low furniture and a Louis Poulsen artichoke lamp frame the stunning view; the nine-foot marble table was cut to fit into the building's freight elevator; cushions on a modular Living Divani sofa can easily be rearranged to create different shapes.



A pull-out Cappellini sofa allows the Ewalds' guest room to do double duty as a family room.

tables," designed by McCafferty and painted citrus orange.

McCafferty also created a dining room table—a single slab of marble—that Stern had to measure to ensure that it would fit into the building's freight elevator. Bow-legged chrome-and-black-leather chairs glide under it easily.

"We find that when working with families who appreciate art, it becomes the defining element. It means they have a point of a view," says McCafferty. "The dining room combines the chrome and glass of '70s design with more-classic elements." Floor-to-ceiling windows across the entire corner unit afford a striking view of the Charles River and Public Garden. To keep this great vista front and center, McCafferty kept all of the furniture low and chose reflective surfaces, using pieces that appear to float off the floor.

The same effect follows in the living room, where large glass tables are sandwiched between two tailored wool couches. McCafferty reupholstered two 1930s chairs in pony hide to add brightness and texture. The space is crowned with a Louis Poulsen artichoke lamp in copper, which McCafferty tracked down in Sweden.

For the Ewalds, the overall design allowed them to forgo a move to the suburbs, which would have required sacrificing the convenience of the city for space. Not only have they been able to retain both, but the collaborative efforts of Stern and McCafferty have given their family room to grow.

And that fits them perfectly. ■

ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIORS
Stern McCafferty, Boston
CONTRACTOR Corderman &
Company, Boston



McCafferty designed (and Stern built) this floating wall as a way to cordon off the media room and conceal power cords.



Clockwise from top left, a vintage sideboard adds texture amid the condo's modern reflective surfaces; McCafferty designed citrus-orange "clip" tables, which slide in and out of the sofa as needed; 1930s-era chairs upholstered in pony hide; McCafferty located this copper Louis Poulsen artichoke lamp in Sweden for the living room; a built-in stainless steel bar provides extra counter space in the kitchen.



Using '70s-era design as her inspiration, McCafferty outfitted the dining room in chrome, glass, and leather.

