

Q&A

Interior designer Michele Plachter gives a Philadelphia warehouse condo its declaration of inventiveness

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Exterior Situated in the artist-charged Old City district of Philadelphia, dubbed the most historic square mile in America, the 1914 warehouse was converted into condos in 2002. It's part of a revamped neighborhood of galleries and American history.

Dining room Defined by original soaring windows that are graced with arched and circular muntins, the dining room was fitted with heirloom furniture from the client's mother. The varied wood tones, natural linen drapery panels, and crystal chandelier soften the black-and-ivory room.

Q What is the appeal of designing in a large warehouse space that originally had commercial purposes?

A I'm a city designer, so a space like this is a dream. The elevator shaft is always a feat, but once it opens, a glorious space unfolds. In this case, my client combined two condos, so the vantage point is stunning. The exposed ductwork and brick walls present a different kind of elegance that leaves cookie-cutter design behind.

Q How do you know when to update and when to leave original elements as they are?

A I have no tricks. It's a gut feeling. There's this idea that old means good. That's not always true. The dining chairs have beautiful shapes but needed a lift with an updated fabric. High-gloss black paint around the windows delivers luxury while maintaining urban grit. The grain of the existing wood gave soul to the room that I would never alter.



Living room Establishing a modern attitude, the tailored silhouette of a new tufted sofa contrasts the raw quality of an organic bench. The armchairs are repurposed from the client's former home in New York. A cocktail table adds a touch of sheen among the textural arrangement that rests atop a thick shag carpet. **Bath** Dynamic photography ushers personal style into the bath, where a cast-iron tub sports a silver finish. **Master bedroom** A sleigh bed sets the color tone, repeating on an old chest of drawers and an armoire. A tufted bench, crystal chandelier, and shag rug enhance the lightness of the room's foundation of painted brick walls and pleated linen draperies that span the large windows.



Q "Brown wood" furniture that's been abandoned in design for so long adds charm to the bedroom. How did you make the traditional furniture current and work within an industrial setting?

A People miss history and are looking for comfort in pieces that tell a story. The wood furniture that my client inherited accomplished that. I added surprise with a new sparkling chandelier to imply sophistication. The white-painted brick walls and a modern bench give the space balance instead of an old, dated feeling.

Q This condo seemingly emphasizes texture and layering over bold color. But color shows up in the artwork. Why here?

A These sorts of industrial spaces commonly walk down the path of sleek, contemporary design in black and white, but I aimed for glamorous and warm. My client's colorful artwork grabs attention in the living room, which is an eclectic mix of classic and modern, hard and soft, shiny and raw. Art has power, and it speaks to the personality of its owner. The goal is always to create a home that is unique. ■