

IT'S PERSONAL

A DESIGN-SAVVY CLIENT ENLISTS PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE TO CREATE A HOME THAT REFLECTS HIS STYLE

WRITTEN BY JACI CONRY
PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL J. LEE



IN THE DINING area (RIGHT), a black Chippendale-style armchair from Jonathan Adler adds a traditional touch to the contemporary aesthetic established by the burlled wood table with stainless steel legs and Louis Ghost chairs.

IN THE LIVING room (FACING PAGE), the palette was guided by the navy blue and brass lamps by Mary McDonald. The end table and chocolate sofa are from Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams. Throw pillows in blue, white, and yellow complement the vintage Yalameh Persian rug.



For interior designer Stephanie Sabbe, clients like Jim Killian don't come around very often. "I do a lot of work for people who have different styles than I do," she says. "This project was fun because Jim picked everything I would if it were my own home."

Killian, a vice president at a private equity firm, is passionate about design and over the years has amassed an intriguing collection of Modern and vintage furniture and contemporary art. When he moved in December 2013 from a tight 690-square-foot condominium in an 1888 brownstone in Boston's South End into a 1,260-square-foot penthouse in one of the neighborhood's 21st-century buildings, he considered designing the space on his own. But he soon realized he needed professional help.

"There are some things I don't know how to do," says Killian. For starters, procuring fabrics and wallcoverings and selecting window treatments baffled him. Finding reliable craftsmen was also a challenge.

Sabbe, who still works with Boston-area clients after recently returning to her native Nashville, Tennessee, with her husband and two children (a third child is expected in May), brought her flair for textiles and skill at layering and refining different aesthetics to the project.

She also called on her crew of talented craftsmen to add crown moulding and remove a wall to create an open floor plan that allows the wonderful light from the wide, nearly floor-to-ceiling windows in the living and dining areas into the kitchen.

"The reason I bought the unit was because of the windows," says Killian. They face Peters



THE LIVING ROOM'S clean-lined coffee table by Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams is juxtaposed with the more traditional carved armchairs from Old Hickory Tannery. The vintage leather Eames chair and ottoman are from homeowner Jim Killian's collection. Interior designer Stephanie Sabbe and Killian (FACING PAGE) share a design sensibility that made it easy to work as a team.



Park, and “there are such beautiful views in the spring and summer.”

Removing the wall also made a dramatic difference in how the space works. Now when Killian cooks for guests, he can be part of the party. “For my birthday recently, I had 35 people, and most were congregating around the kitchen,” he says. “It wouldn’t have been possible to have that many people here before.”

The new custom cabinetry is a cheerful gray blue that Killian initially doubted would work. “It was much more blue than I expected,” he says. “I called Stephanie and sort of freaked out on her.” Sabbe calmed him down, and it wasn’t long before he fell for the color.

Sabbe also suggested refinishing the worn and scratched honey-colored floors with a dark stain, which immediately gave the space a refined vibe. Fresh paint came next. “The walls, ceiling, and baseboard were taupe,” says Killian. “I felt like I was living in a box.” Soft gray walls with white trim now ground the space, and the furnishings incorporate pops of navy blue — Killian’s favorite color — and brass.

Well-curated patterns play a part in the decor, including the kitchen backsplash of New Ravenna’s handcrafted Raj Mosaic, which combines light gray paperwhite marble and black polished statuary Carrara marble in a chevron design.

THE KITCHEN, NOW OPEN TO BOTH THE dining and the living areas, has custom cabinetry painted gray blue and white granite countertops. The chevron-patterned backsplash is a combination of light gray and black marble. In the hallway (FACING PAGE, TOP), a Phillip Jeffries wallcovering brings texture to the walls. The vanity in the guest bathroom (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM) is from RH. The brass hardware plays to the graphic wallcovering.

Pattern also is a key element in the guest bathroom, where Sabbe used a geometric Phillip Jeffries wallcovering in green, brown, and gold that wows but doesn’t overpower the small space. “It feels masculine and complements the gold hardware on the sink and vanity,” says Sabbe.

For the living room, she found a vintage Yalameh Persian rug that echoes the camel color of Killian’s leather Eames chair and the navy of the lampshades and throw pillows. “Even before Stephanie had the rug completely unrolled, we both knew it was perfect,” says Killian.

Sabbe also did some simplifying. “Jim



THE TUFTED HEADBOARD in the master bedroom is custom from Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams. An Eleanor Pritchard quilt and throw pillow accent the Ralph Lauren navy blue coverlet. Killian scored the vintage Federal mirror on [etsy.com](https://www.etsy.com). The chandelier is from Ballard Designs.



DESIGN DECISION *Lights Up*

Jim Killian wanted dramatic light fixtures to capitalize on the 11-foot ceilings in his new penthouse. For the living room, he selected the Art Deco-inspired Odeon Clear Glass Fringe Chandelier from RH, which he says “was the perfect mix of traditional with a twist.”

Above the dining table, he needed a fixture that would help define that part of the open-concept space but not compete with the showpiece chandelier in the living area. He chose RH’s Modern Filament Chandelier, a long, streamlined geometric design that casts ambient light through old-fashioned Edison-style filament bulbs. “I loved the pairing of something a little more traditional with something more modern,” says Killian. “It’s been quite interesting to see how people gravitate to one fixture over the other.”

For the master bedroom, Sabbe found a brass chandelier from Ballard Designs. But to give it a more distinctive flair, she removed the shades from the four accordion-style arms and left the globe light bulbs unadorned.

had a lot of stuff,” says the designer, “so we pared it down, which let some of the really wonderful things that are special to him stand out.” One such piece is the large photograph by Josef Hoflehner that Killian purchased shortly after he bought his new home. Hanging above the couch, it depicts a 1980s era pay phone. “My dad worked for the phone company, and because of his job, we moved 17 times before I went away to college,” says Killian. “The photograph really spoke to me.”

Project complete, Killian now has a multi-dimensional haven that suits his style and personality to a T. Both homeowner and designer agree that the cohesive, layered space is the result of their shared design sensibilities and respective strengths. Without one or the other, such a complete aesthetic wouldn’t have been possible. “Jim cared about every detail,” says Sabbe. “He wanted to be involved in every aspect of designing his space. We really worked as a team.” Together, they created a home that sparkles with individuality and feels both high style and approachable. ■

FOR MORE
DETAILS,
SEE
RESOURCES

LIGHT FIXTURES AND the vanity in the master bathroom (RIGHT TOP) are from RH. The gray and white striped Ann Sacks wall tile envelops the space, continuing into the walk-in shower (RIGHT), where it looks almost like wallpaper. The floor is Carrara marble laid in a herringbone pattern.

