

# LOFTY in Los Angeles

AN ELEGANT WESTSIDE PENTHOUSE FULFILLS A DREAM

Interior Design by Hendrix Allardyce/Text by Jeff Turrentine/Photography by Mary E. Nichols

"It's not intended to be a gallery. It's comfortable, warm and inviting." designer Thomas Allardyce says of a penthouse filled with art that he and his partner, Bea Hendrix, conceived for Gerry and Gloria Laskin in Los Angeles. Turrez Picaz's They entered antiques and French Art Deco pieces in the living room. Clarence House sofa, velvet, sofa pillow fabric, Kersey, Stark carpets.



For years Gerry Lushing bit his tongue whenever he and his wife, Gloria, would drive past the phalanx of tall apartment buildings that loom above Wilshire Boulevard, on Los Angeles' Westside—the city's own little slice of Manhattan—or Chicago-style high-rise living. At his wife's urging, he had agreed in the mid-1980s to remain in and renovate the Tudor-style house they'd bought in Beverly Hills back in the late 1960s (see *Architectural Digest*, December 1989). In his heart, though, he dreamed of moving to one of those penthouses and letting the building staff handle worse of the more quotidian hassles of homeownership while he and his wife concentrated on relaxing, entertaining and enjoying the view.

The duo enlisted by the Lushings to oversee that 1980s renovation, designers Blye Hendrix and Thomas Allardyce, had done right by their clients: So successful had it been that the Lushings opted to stay in the house for another 20 years. But eventually, Gerry Lushing got his wish. When he and his wife learned that a new building was going up on Wilshire Boulevard's high-rise corridor, they bought themselves a piece of it—even though, at the time, the apartment existed only in blueprints. Then they called their old designers and let them know that they had a big, big project in the works.

From the very beginning, says his wife, Gerry Lushing was the kind of client who essentially defines the adjective *hand-on*.

Answer: The *Figures*, 1974, by Willem de Kooning is displayed over the sofa in the entrance hall. An untitled oil by Franz Kline is above the Italian Art Deco wall console. The four-story low tables are from the Hendrix Allardyce Design Collection. Stark carpet, R16211; Ferrand Leger's *Composion aux Deux Fleurs*, 1931, hangs above the fireplace surround, from Chesney's, in the living room.





To wit: When Allardyce found some dining table candidates in San Francisco, they were ready to hop on the first plane to take a look. "We were leaving the house to go to the airport, and the car was waiting for us," recalls Gloria Lushing. "But suddenly Gerry walked back inside. He came back after a while. He said he'd gone back in to get a place mat for us to take with us" as a visual aid, in order to test how "inviting" the table looked when set. "Sure enough, we got there, and the table that was Tom's favorite was outrageously beautiful," she says. "But the place mat didn't look right on it." They went with another one instead.

"The whole idea for this apartment was to maximize open space and to use as few

rooms as possible, so that every area bleeds into the other," says Allardyce. Toward that end, he and Hendrix did all they could to conceal load-bearing walls in the architecture, letting one space blend into the next, which makes this apartment 22 stories above the city seem like it's floating on a cloud.

Furnishings, says Allardyce, are "an international mix, heavily influenced by pieces from the 1930s and '40s." Since the clients were art collectors, he says, they loved the process of selecting pieces, one by one. "They edited the choices in much the same way they chose their art. I think their passion definitely carried over from art to furnishings. We had the luxury of lots and lots of time."

The layout is simple—as befits a couple

whose children had flown the coop and who were interested in streamlining their lives as much as possible. The elevator opens onto a vestibule, from whose double doors one can choose to go right—into the living and dining spaces—or left, into the private ones. In the living room, prewar European pieces mix with complementary ones designed by Hendrix and Allardyce, effectively obliterating the division between "new" and "vintage" and replacing it with a single standard of timeless elegance. Here and there are wonderfully unique items, like a pair of chinoiserie armchairs taken from a "Chinese palace"—albeit one that happened to be located just outside Palermo, Sicily.

An adjacent media room houses a re-

markable assortment of German beer steins collected by Gloria Lushing after World War II. It also features, curiously, two flat-screen televisions, set perpendicular to one another in the room's two seating areas. "Everybody comments on it," she confesses, before adding: "They're always on the same channel."

The kitchen combines mahogany, lacquer and opaque glass to achieve a calm, sophisticated effect. "It was designed to accommodate all of the couple's specific needs—which Gerry wrote out in detail," says Allardyce. "He measured every cabinet we had designed for the previous house, every tray, every dish—he wanted to make sure that they'd have exactly the same storage capability here."

**ABOVE LEFT:** James Rosenquist's *White Point*, 1961, is above the banquette in the media room. At left is Jean Dubuffet's *Site aux Trois Personnes*, 1962. The settee is from the Hendrix Allardyce Collection. Scalapourini hangs their fabric. Samuel & Sons wallcovering trim. **ABOVE:** The dining room. An unframed 1954 oil by Joan Mitchell is above the Maison Gerard sideboard.

"We took an understated, classic modern approach," says Allardyce (opposite, right, with Hendrix). "The paintings and sculptures come to life within this environment and are the focal point in each room. The home is to be experienced."

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Gerry Lushing never stopped working on the details of his dream apartment, says his wife, even after being diagnosed with a brain tumor. He passed away shortly after the couple moved in. Though he didn't have enough time to enjoy the apartment in its completion, he clearly relished every minute of planning it.

And so his spirit is everywhere: in the kitchen cabinets, in the collection of Lalique hood ornaments that were his pride and joy, and in the stunning collection of artworks that he and his wife had been acquiring together since the 1970s. Among them: a pair of Andy Warhol portraits of Gloria Lushing, commissioned by her husband for her birthday and done in the artist's signature Pop style—the same one used to capture Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor and Jackie O. They are truly splendid gifts, from him to her—just two of many to be found in this apartment, her gift to him. □

**APPROX:** The master bedroom, Sheraton 1980 is by Andy Warhol. Bed linen, E. Braun & Co. Bergamini bed skirt reflects. **REAR:** The master sitting room. The 1972 sculpture is by Dubuffet. **LAVEN:** sofa's pillow fabric, Drapery fabric, Brunschwig & Fils. Rogers & Goffigon Boston shade fabric.

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