

# HIGH CONCEPT

In a downtown penthouse, Alan and Ben King display their art within a unique, welcoming space

by  
**AYN-MONIQUE KLAHRE**  
*photography by*  
**ABIGAIL JACKSON**

## CITY VIEWS

Alan and Ben King's downtown penthouse boasts soaring ceilings and loads of light to highlight their broad collection of art from local and international makers.







High above S. West Street, a penthouse at The Fairweather offers more than a view — it offers a vision. Home to Alan and Ben King, the two-story condo is a sophisticated, art-filled sanctuary. But it didn't start out that way. "It was a white box with not a lot of character, but room to work," says Sally Williams of Colorful Concepts Interior Design, who was enlisted to transform the space.

The apartment already had great light, soaring ceilings and generous balconies; Williams worked with the Kings to incorporate unique textures and smart custom furnishings to highlight their contemporary art collection and make the space welcoming for guests, kids and grandkids. "We didn't want our home to feel like a museum; we want anyone who comes in here to enjoy it fully," says Ben.

The Kings bought their place downtown in 2023 after living in North Ridge. "We loved our house, but after buying a mountain retreat during the pandemic, it was unnecessary to have two large properties," says Alan. "We also missed being engaged with the city — I lived downtown in the early 2000s, before Ben and I were married — and this felt like the perfect time to come back."

The first step was to inventory the couple's broad art collection, which includes pieces from artists as varied as Asheville-based potter Kyle Carpenter and Bahamian-American textile artist April Bey. "We started with the art — inventorying every piece," says Williams. "Each room was then designed to complement and elevate those works." Williams worked with the couple to photograph and measure dozens of works, including

paintings, photographs and ceramics, as well as their large collection of family photos.

Next, Williams worked with the penthouse's existing architecture to add custom finishes that balance and complement the artwork. On a featureless wall in the living area, she added a dramatic fireplace to anchor the room and create a focal point. Its lower third is clad in black plaster, while the top is finished in slatted wood, which adds dimension and frames a black-and-white photograph by Turkish-American photographer Sarp Kerem Yavuz. "The artwork is so bold, so dynamic — it demanded a space that could stand up to it without competing," Williams explains. "We stayed away from heavy color and focused on tonal contrast and materiality." It also provides balance to the other side of the room, where she

#### IN THE BALANCE

Sally Williams designed this plaster and slatted wood fireplace to create a focal point in the double-height living room. It frames a piece by Turkish-American photographer Sarp Kerem Yavuz. A pair of curved sofas creates a comfortable conversation area. *Opposite page:* Across the room are the loft and dining area, with a wood accent wall in each. Three skinny shelves display the couple's pottery collection, including pieces by Kyle Carpenter, an Asheville artist.

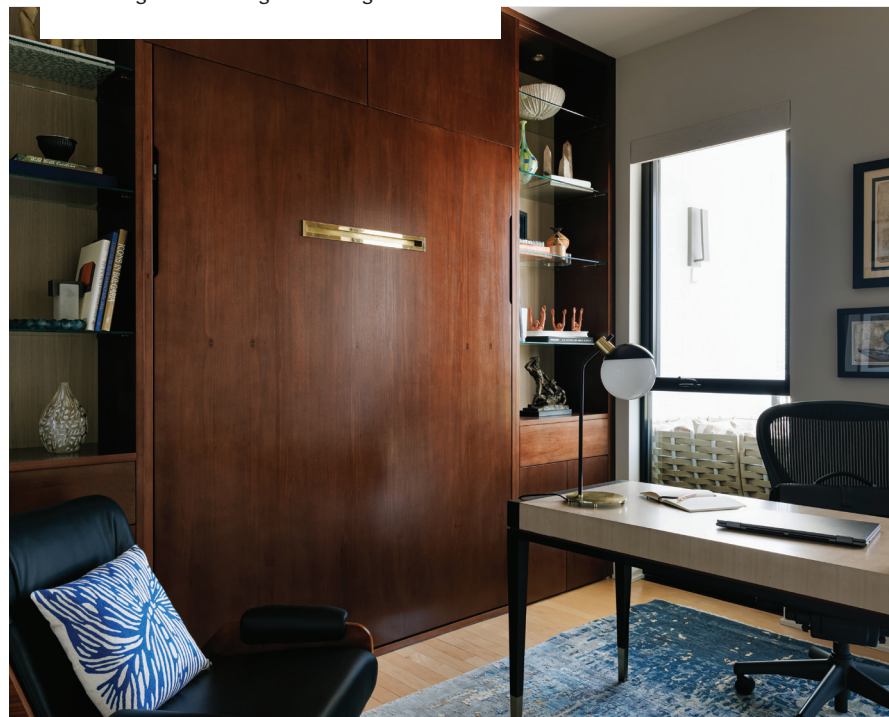






#### WOOD TONES

Williams used wood accents to unify various parts of the home. In the dining room, she ran flooring material along one wall. On it hangs a black-and-white abstract painting by Chuck Rose, who's based in Raleigh. Since Alan uses his office for work most of the time, Williams ordered a custom Murphy bed to give the space an elegant finish while also functioning as a guest room. "It was a design puzzle," says Williams. "We found solutions that balanced function and form." In the kitchen area, she hung Italian glass pendants above the island. A painting with blue details pulls in the colors from the rugs in the living and dining areas.



#### GLAMOROUS DETAILS

In the primary bedroom, Williams ran oak flooring with marble and brass inlays behind the headboard to add drama. Italian glass pendants hang above the beveled nightstands. She installed black-out shades behind the sheer curtains, but, Alan notes, "We've never used them. The view at night is too good." They made use of every space — including the hallways and bathrooms — to display art.







#### ROOMS WITH VIEWS

The couple uses the loft to watch television or they'll sit on the balcony, where they can hear concerts from Red Hat Amphitheater or watch the *Shimmer Wall* light up. "Living downtown has reconnected us to Raleigh in ways we didn't expect," says Alan. "We walk to Poole's, Barcelona Wine Bar, CAM — this is a city that has grown into itself." The couple has recently connected with Raleigh artist Clarence Heyward and have two of his pieces, *Dad on Duty* and *Portrait of William Paul Thomas*, on display. *Opposite page*: The balcony off the living area; Ben and Alan King at home.



ran geometric oak and birch paneling along the wall that rises from the dining area into the loft. "I love how the fireplace becomes the nexus of the space, but those wood accents create these warm, intimate spaces without being overpowering," says Alan.

Throughout the condo, Williams created different gallery moments. The stairwell showcases several large pieces, with a portrait of Durham artist William Paul Thomas by Raleigh painter Clarence Heyward as the star, mounted on marble-patterned wallpaper. "The wallpaper gives your eye a place to rest and allows you to appreciate the piece," says Williams. In the family area, a trio of contemporary shelves display pottery that the Kings have collected over the years.

**"We didn't want our home to feel like a museum; we want anyone who comes in here to enjoy it fully."**  
— Ben King

In the entryway, a single framed painting — *They Call Her Yvette* by Washington, D.C., painter J. Rodney Dennis — holds court above a console by High Point artisan Jeremy Kamiya. "You can't stop looking at it," Alan says. "There's something magnetic about her expression."

The same consideration for art and detailing is given to the home's more intimate spaces. In the primary bedroom, Williams used another wooden wall treatment, this one with petal-shaped marble and brass accents, as a headboard.

The walls are painted a rich gray-blue to make it feel cozy. For the office, which also serves as a guest room, Williams commissioned a custom Murphy bed with brass hardware. "It makes perfect use of the space — you just push the desk aside," says Alan.

"Our granddaughter was thrilled to be the first to use it!" Another guest room features landscapes by Maine artist Jean Jack, who Alan favors since he grew up in the state.

The pièce de résistance, however, might be the view. Says Ben, who hails from Broadway, NC: "My husband and I both had such modest lifestyles, growing up in rural country towns — sometimes I look out across the city and wonder if this is really my life."