

Charlotte

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2021

# HOME

DESIGN & DECOR®

*Arts &*  
ARCHITECTURE

*PLUS:*  
WOMEN ARTISTS

A STYLE HUNTRESS'  
TREASURE TROVE



Pursley and Ford transformed the one-time traditional entryway by removing the busy floral wallpaper and pulling up the existing hardwood floors, replacing them with white peacock pavers and black wood paneling. The addition of white sheers allows for privacy and softens the lines of the space. The Palecek Riley storage stools provide additional seating for a larger gathering.







# URBAN *AESTHETIC*

ARCHITECT  
KEN PURSLEY  
AND  
INTERIOR  
DESIGNER  
BRONWYN  
FORD  
TRANSFORM  
A DATED  
UPTOWN  
CONDO INTO  
A MODERN  
SPACE.

TEXT BY  
**BLAKE MILLER**  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
**EMILY FOLLOWILL**  
STYLING BY  
**ELEANOR ROPER**







**LEFT:** The dining area is discreetly hidden behind the den's living space so the room can function as a place to entertain and live comfortably. The black wood paneling and white peacock paver flooring let the impressive art collection play center stage.

THE HOMEOWNER HAS ALWAYS HAD A GREEN thumb. So when she and her husband decided to move to Uptown, one of her priorities was to find a place where she could continue gardening in spite of the urban setting. The couple's landscape architect knew of one particular condo that would satisfy the homeowner's criteria for green space. Not long after, the couple made an offer to purchase the apartment. Located in the heart of Uptown, it features 2,600 square feet of terrace—perfect for urban gardening.

While the outdoor space was exactly what they'd been looking for, the interior of the condo was not. The couple purchased the home in 2005, and, as such, the finishes and details were dated and awash with a neutral earth-tone color palette. "At first, we just did very minor cosmetic changes," says the homeowner. "There were always things I disliked about the space. And after living there for a while, we decided we needed an update."

The couple reached out to longtime friend and architect Ken Pursley, who had worked on their two previous residences. "She's really intentional about how she lives her life, and this home just wasn't speaking to her," says Pursley of the homeowner. "The integrity of the space wasn't very good. It wasn't just dated; it was not well done. She understands that the level and quality of a space can make you feel a certain way, and she knew it didn't feel good to her."

**RIGHT:** The homeowners love cooking and entertaining, so the kitchen needed to function as much as a utilitarian space as an entertaining area. Pursley designed the kitchen to look like an extension of the den by incorporating vinyl upholstered cabinet panels, which conceal the refrigerator, among other features. Instead of traditional pendants, an oversized custom light fixture by Evan Wood was added over the island.

While Pursley's firm has always focused mainly on architecture and complementary interior design work, the firm, Pursley Dixon Architecture, officially formalized its new interior design company, Pursley Dixon Ford Interior Design, in the spring of 2020. Headed by interior designer Bronwyn Ford, the interior design arm was a natural extension of the firm's architectural work, perfectly marrying the team's amazing eye for design and details with interior design. Pursley and Ford met with the homeowners to tease out exactly what the home needed in order to evoke the feeling the clients wanted every time they walked through their front door. "The design wasn't intentional," says Pursley of the existing space. "The interior design was leftover furniture from her previous home. It was never cooked together with a vision or thread to it. It had a bit of a haphazard feel to it, and the shell was pretty vanilla."

A reworking of the kitchen, dining area, den, and an adjacent space off the kitchen was the first priority in creating a more livable but wholly sophisticated living area. The kitchen was designed as more of an extension of the family room, both physically and aesthetically, with the custom cabinetry and oversized Caesarstone island made to look more like furniture and less like a









utilitarian space. “Nowadays, designing a functional but beautiful kitchen is so much easier because we have so many products that are high-performance fabrics,” Ford explains. “Vinyls that look just like leather; countertops like Caesarstone that are beautiful but extremely durable.” The one-time sitting room off the kitchen was transformed into a scullery, which allows for sit-down dining and storage of everyday appliances, all of which are easily tucked away with a hidden door during large parties but easily opened for everyday living. “One thing I love about it is the whole idea of kinetic space,” explains Pursley of the scullery. “You can open it up and close it down. There’s this whole transformer element to the space

that makes it have a level of complexity that you don’t necessarily see when you walk in. This was the bulk of the architectural reworking. It really drove the design so we could have a more minimal kitchen and a support space nearby.”

While the project began with the reworking of the den, dining, and kitchen areas, once those spaces were nearing completion, it became clear that the rest of the home’s public spaces needed an update, as well. White peacock pavers, white paint, and sheer drapes throughout the rest of the spaces created a modern black-and-white contrast and instantly modernized the large hallways and entryway to the home, as well as the living room. “All white





**LEFT:** The scullery can easily be closed off during larger parties but can remain open for additional entertaining space. White peacock pavers extend into the space from the kitchen and den, making it feel as if it is one part of the larger living area.

**RIGHT:** The scullery is just off the den and kitchen, so it had to be functional but beautiful. A custom worktable is both utilitarian and aesthetically pleasing with its wood base and Caesarstone top. The bar stool is by Four Hands.



walls and dark floors tend to get a bit monotonous,” Pursley says. “Here we have white floors and dark walls, and it turns the home into a special event.”

To elevate the home’s interior design, Ford was tasked not only with the usual furniture and fabric selections but, more importantly, with art placement—a feat that was not lost on the designer. “They have this amazing art collection that was simply being lost with the original backdrop,” she says. “These are pieces by Matisse, Rembrandt, Peter Max, all of which almost looked like posters because nothing else around it was to that level. My goal was for the art to be the main feature and all of the furnishings to be subservient

to the artwork. I was constantly considering that balance and how certain things needed to come forward, and the furnishings needed to be softer in the background.”

The black wood paneling and white peacock paver flooring, along with art lighting, highlighted each piece of art, while the furnishings played a supporting role aesthetically. “Part of what I think Bronwyn did so well was take the antiques, new pieces, and items made by local craftsman and turn them into things that are so different and make them make sense together,” Pursley says. “Clients will throw all these ideas at you, and your job is to make it look like it makes sense. That’s what Bronwyn did so well. She took all of this

The bar in the hallway was designed to look and feel like a piece of furniture. "I wanted space to entertain and to have a central space where we could have a little buffet for Christmas dinner or neighbors over for an afternoon cocktail party," says the homeowner. The artwork is by Peter Max.

**OPPOSITE TOP:** Because the living room is often used for family gatherings and entertaining, it needed extra seating, so Ford added the pair of custom sofas by Morgan Chair Upholstery and a custom cocktail table with a base by Jeremy Hubbard and top from Instyle. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:**

The goal of the powder room's design was "to create a very interesting, chic, and 'hidden' powder room that wasn't immediately off of the main living space," Ford says. The light fixture is by The Urban Electric Co.







artwork that the homeowner had that was haphazardly placed and made it all one cohesive look.”

Additionally, Ford was able to create a cohesive design that pulled together some of the clients’ existing pieces with more modern ones. “The homeowner is willing to do things that are a bit edgier and different than what you’d normally see in Charlotte,” Ford says. “You’d have these beat-up old leather club chairs from nineteenth-century France, which we paired with these clean, modern lines and more stark furnishings. It was nice to have this great tension between the old and the new.”

After giving Ford carte blanche on artwork placement, the homeowner could not have been happier with the result. “I came home one day, and they’d hung it all. Bronwyn’s real skill really shined,” she says. “It was such an aha moment to see how she’d placed all of the artwork. There aren’t a lot of people who have that skill. She started with lots of art—lots of big art—and they all look like the artist came in and chose the placement him or herself.”

Though it’s taken the couple fifteen years to truly have the home they wanted, it’s been worth the long wait. “I love that Ken and Bronwyn are collaborative,” says the homeowner. “There are a lot of creative people in the world who are not interested in anyone else’s vision. Ken and Bronwyn listened and heard exactly what we wanted in this home. I want to come in my home and be happy and comfortable and inspired, and they helped me do that.” ♦

