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A ROOM WITH A VIEW

This New Jersey condo needed a versatile lighting design that was as aesthetically pleasing as the room's spectacular view of the Manhattan skyline.

BY LINDA LONGO

The owners of this Fort Lee, N.J. condo had an enviable view of New York City, but the living room was long overdue for a makeover befitting the postcard-like setting. Familiar with the work of interior designer Tammy Kaplan of Images in Design in Cranford, N.J., the couple asked her to transform the space.

The room, which measured approximately 32' x 24' overall, included a living area and an informal bar. It was a challenge on several levels. First of all, its unconventional shape was the result of the previous owner's decision to combine two adjacent apartments into one — with several inconvenient yet necessary structural columns in place. As with most apartments, the ceiling would not accommodate recessed lighting and the homeowners hated the look of the existing track lighting.

In addition, the design had to be extremely versatile and multi-functional since four children, a housekeeper, and two adults would be using the space daily. What's an interior designer to do? Believe it or not, Kaplan's first step on the project was to select the proper lighting. "I had never started a project with the lighting before, but I had to in this case because it was an apartment and we had concrete ceilings to work with," Kaplan explains.

The interior designer came up with an innovative lighting concept that provided enough ambient lighting in the living room area without resorting to track lighting. "I started the project with the concept of sconces because I think sconces are beautiful and decorative," Kaplan states. As a result, she specified three 100-watt, low-voltage halogen sconces with alabaster bowls and silver leafed arms (by J. Robert Scott) to illuminate the

The before shot of the living room space shows ordinary track lighting, which was relied upon to provide light for the entire room.

PHOTO CREDIT: Melabee M. Miller

After much remodeling by Tammy Kaplan, the space is transformed.

important to us."

Then a track system by Zumtobel Staff caught her eye. Knowing that her clients were resistant to track lighting, this designer found it difficult to explain to the client how the lighting would look in the space. She had to first convince the clients that this was not like the ordinary track system they loathed.

For starters, the track is made entirely of glass, and it is the transparency of the track that makes the lighting fixtures appear to float in the air above the bar. "It's very light and airy; the system makes a beautiful focal point," she comments, adding, "It also gave us flexibility because we could drop pendants down from it. I knew that the client did not want track lighting, but how else could you light such a space? We [the clients and I] did not want to create a soffit; it would have eaten up too much space and would appear too claustrophobic. We wanted something more unique."

The mirrored columns and back wall along the bar did not make the area look very inviting, nor did the metal folding chairs in front of the bar countertop.

PHOTO CREDIT: Melabee M. Miller

What a difference! By creating several tiers in the bar countertops, installing eye-catching glass cabinetry, and utilizing a spectacular lighting system, the bar area is a knock-out.

The Zumtobel Staff line addressed this design need perfectly. Not only could the versatile system be installed at an unobtrusive height (a mere six inches from the ceiling), but the curve of the track actually matches the curve of the bar. "We loved that the glass elements were actually glass triangles. [The triangular shape echoes the triangles on the sconces in the living room.] We doubled them up to make more of a visual impact. It really added a lot of interest to the space," she says.

Kaplan utilized 20 lighting fixtures along the track system, including four pendants that directed light down onto the countertop work surfaces. "Because we were using so much voltage, we had to have two feeds and two transformers, which we located inside the cabinet of the bar sink," the designer states. "It was tricky to utilize the system in this [unusual] way, but it was well worth it. We used approximately 14 feet of track; it's a big system. However, if someone is looking for a very special look — especially in an apartment setting — this is perfect." Two custom-made sconces flank the bar area and provide additional lighting and further enhance the overall space.

With the lighting in place, Kaplan began transforming the rest of the bar area. "The whole idea in this project was to create a design that could accommodate multiple uses," she states. That's the reason why the designer chose to create a multi-tiered bar — one where the homeowner could pull up a chair and enjoy a buffet dinner at the table-height portion of the bar, enjoy a drink or two while sitting on a bar stool at the countertop section that is at bar-height, and prepare a drink or snack on a work surface below eye level to prevent clutter.

"In any apartment situation, you need to have a variety of uses for each element," Kaplan explains. For example, the counter of the bar wraps around the back of the column on the left where it

seating area. Kaplan then cleverly concealed the electrical wiring by commissioning three wooden columns, made of Anigrey wood from Africa, that only slightly protrude from the wall.

By extending the light source above the seating area, the columns also help the sconces light the room. "Without the columns, the sconces would just wash the wall," she says. "I wanted the columns to be very interesting, so I put in an inverted triangle in satin black lacquer wood. We were going for an Art Deco feeling," the designer explains.

In addition to cozying up the seating space and hiding the electrical wiring for the lighting fixtures, the columns also conceal speakers used for the surround sound for the floor-to-ceiling TV/stereo system. At the base of each column, Kaplan designed small tables (with Corian tops) that are nestled in among the seat cushions, providing a handy surface for resting a drink or hors d'oeuvre.

The custom columns — along with the new textured wall treatment, deep spice-colored carpet, and richly patterned upholstery fabric all personally selected by Kaplan — helped warm up the seating area. "I went with warmer tones like cappuccino, mocha, and black, to hide dirt," the designer says. "All of the chairs were custom-made for this project and even the carpet was custom-colored and dyed for this room. Everything is very clean-looking."

As this before shot demonstrates, the living room section lacked warmth and a sense of coziness.

PHOTO CREDIT: Melabee M. Miller

A soffit above the window (complete with recessed lighting), three 100-watt alabaster sconces for ambient light, and display lighting in the entertainment center enhance the warmth of the room created by the custom carpeting, cabinetry, and upholstery.

To disguise the existing radiator in place below the large living room window, Kaplan enclosed it with Anigrey wood and installed a soffit complete with recessed lighting by W.A.C.

To tie the look of the room together, the massive audio-visual/entertainment center on the opposite wall from the sofa was enclosed with wood and incorporated a glass-fronted display cabinet illuminated by low-voltage lighting from W.A.C. In addition, all of the lighting in the living room is switched separately and is on dimmers for maximum flexibility.

By far the toughest challenge Kaplan faced was the existing wet bar, which was adjacent to the living room. Surrounded almost completely by mirrored walls and columns that formed a dark alcove, selecting the right lighting was paramount.

While Kaplan traveled to the well-known design buildings in New York City in order to find the perfect sconces for the living room and bar area, it was at the LEC lighting showroom in Teterboro, N.J. where she discovered the perfect solution to this unusual bar application. "I had a pretty good idea of what I needed," Kaplan recalls. "I needed something that was long and narrow, but there wasn't a lot [on the market] available. It also needed to provide a lot of light. The functionality of the lighting was very

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becomes bar-height. There is a section that is counter-height, which is used for food preparation or work space, and there is the table-height section in front of the bar. "The chairs at the front of the bar are on casters, so they can be moved to the other seating area for TV/movie viewing," she notes.

The Anigrey wood that Kaplan used throughout the living room area is also incorporated into the bar setting. "I chose this wood because of its characteristics when you stain it," she comments. "We were going for a clean look and didn't want anything heavy. This wood just had such beauty and lustre when you stained it. That ribbon effect that you see is in the wood itself; it has such interest to it."

Most importantly, the client fell in love with the entire space. "The clients are very comfortable living there. Now the space works for them and their lifestyle," the designer explains. "It's not a heavy look; instead it is light and spacious. It does not have a cluttered feeling. The most important thing is to make the space livable and to construct [the design] with materials that will last over the long haul. It's important that the clients get pleasure from the design, after all they've really invested in it." Finally, the interior of this condo matches its breathtaking view of the outside world.

Product Line-Up

All furniture and cabinetry custom-designed by Tammy Kaplan, Images in Design Inc., Cranford, N.J.

Wood for custom furniture: Anigrey wood from Africa

Custom cabinetry built by Chris DeGregorio at MCM

Glass track lighting: Zumtobel Staff Lighting

Undercabinet low-voltage halogen lighting: CSL

Low-voltage recessed lighting: W.A.C.

Long sconces on the entertainment unit/bar area: Sirmos Lighting

Sconces by seating area: J. Robert Scott

Accessories purchased at Colours

To Our Valued Customers:

In the December issue of *Home Lighting & Accessories* the article entitled "The Reign of Spain: Two Spanish Lighting Manufacturers Form U.S. Divisions" needs clarification.

The article was partially correct, but misleading with regard to the relationship between Basic Source and Leds. Basic Source continues to be Leds's largest U.S. customer. Basic Source is still buying from Leds on an exclusive basis more than 110 styles, which are featured in the current Masterpiece Collection catalog. These items may be offered for sales in the U.S. **only** through Basic Source and its sales representatives and may not be offered by Leds sales reps to any customer.

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Ronnie Rosenbach
Vice President, Sales and Marketing