



MINIMALIST CHIC
Clockwise from top left: The living room statement pieces are accent tables from Vestu and a console from BoConcept; Christopher Brown and Douglas Rogers love the clean lines of each space; an American Leather foldout sofa awaits guests in the den.

GRAND NEST

A COUPLE MOVES FROM A DUPONT VICTORIAN TO A DAZZLING AND MODERN UPGRADE IN STYLE.

By Jennifer Sergent
Photography by Greg Powers

Call it an empty-nest opportunity: With one child off to college and another living out of state, Christopher Brown and Douglas Rogers looked around their four-story townhouse near Dupont Circle and realized it was time for a change.

The Victorian townhouse "was due for a 20-year renovation," says Rogers, a forensic accountant who investigates corporate financial fraud. So the choice became, renovate rooms they no longer needed or discover a smaller luxe space?

The decision was fairly obvious, especially since they've started spending time at a second home in Miami. "We really wanted something simpler, so we could lock and go," says Brown, a partner at the Ackerman Brown law firm in DC. Once they identified a gorgeous space with floor-to-ceiling windows in a new building just off the U Street corridor, they turned to longtime friend Ernesto Santalla, an architect

and designer who's married to Brown's law partner, Glen Ackerman.

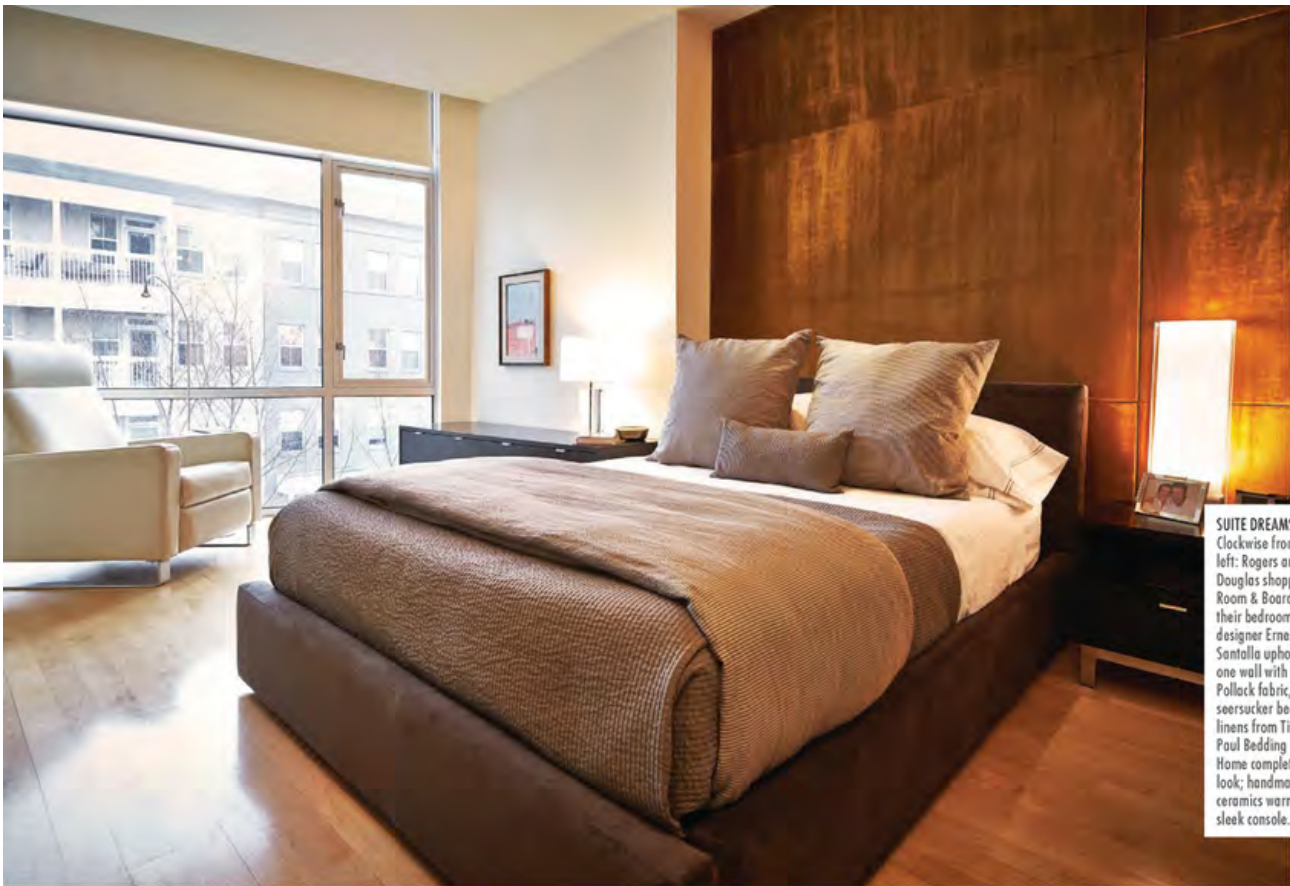
The couple loved the building's construction, with its contemporary aesthetic, huge windows and fine finishes, but they needed help organizing the open-plan living and dining areas, and wanted to create more continuity between that area and the bedroom, den and kitchen.

Santalla took advantage of the high concrete ceiling, dropping it in certain areas to accentuate spaces from above, such as the round niche above the dining table that anchors an arresting Italian light fixture. The living area, likewise, is centered under a square niche with similarly contemporary lights. That way, Santalla says, "You've defined areas without the need of putting up a wall."

In other areas, the award-winning designer went halfway between opening space and closing it off. Brown and Rogers prefer to keep their kitchen private when they



CROWNING TOUCH
A showstopping light fixture by Ylabizzuno crowns the dining area and further establishes the contemporary design aesthetic throughout the light-filled apartment.



SUITE DREAMS
 Clockwise from top left: Rogers and Douglas shopped Room & Board for their bedroom; designer Ernesto Santalla upholstered one wall with Pollock fabric, while seersucker bed linens from Timothy Paul Bedding + Home complete the look; handmade ceramics warm the sleek console.



entertain, so Santalla had a wall of frosted glass installed to separate it from the dining area—a solution that achieves their sought-after privacy, but still reels in abundant light from the window wall beyond.

Santalla calls this convention a “soft enclosure,” and he did the same thing with double doors leading into a windowless den off the front hall, where the couple’s sons sleep when they’re in town. He also broke down sections of the wall that separates the living area from the master bedroom, installing frosted-glass partitions topped with clear-glass transoms. The result lends even more of an open, airy feeling to the condo while still keeping key spaces removed. The effect is “this very urban, cosmopolitan feel,” the designer says.

Because Santalla is also an architect, he infused the condo’s structural design into the interiors. He painted the ceiling niches to give the spaces below more heft, for example, and he incorporated the square and rectangular grid shapes of the master-

bedroom windows into the upholstered panels behind the bed.

Santalla was also conscious of how the condo would be viewed from the street, where the dramatic lights above the dining table are visible—even through the sheer draperies at night. “That’s one of the ways you experience a space,” he says, noting that, even within a condo building, the exterior view is just as important as the interior.



Brown and Rogers love the result. “The simplicity of this place makes me more relaxed,” Brown says. Rogers adds, “I like the fact that we were able to make it really high-end.”

The best part is the home’s utter efficiency. Naturally, the absence of the couple’s kids might have something to do with this phenomenon. “It’s nice to have a house we can keep clean,” Brown says with a laugh. “It was the first opportunity we had to upgrade the furniture without having teenagers in the picture.” ■