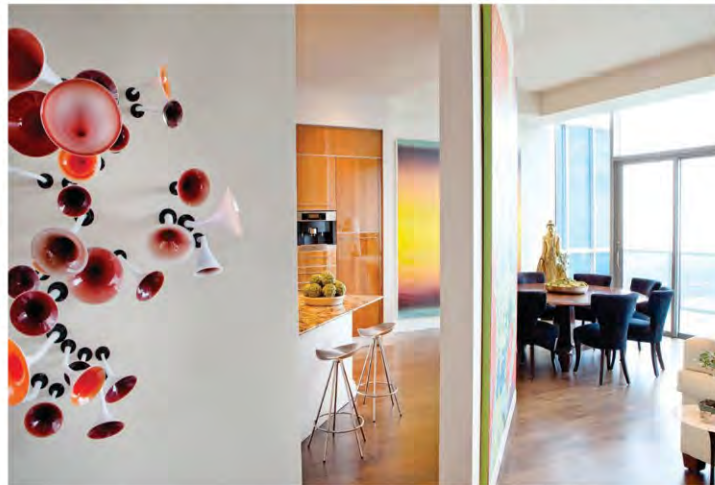




PICTURE PERFECT
 Clockwise from left: This Turnberry Tower penthouse paints a river-and-city tableau; the open-concept interior plays stage to the glass sculpture of Graham Caldwell; the works of geometric guru Peter Halley and abstract artist Eric Freeman line the bright living room.



Changing Scales

A concert pianist and her husband downsize in spectacular fashion.

| *By Jennifer Sergent* |
 | *Photography by Malek Naz Freidouni* |

Ever since they saw interior designer Lisa Bartolomei's work in a show house several years ago, pianist Mary Kathleen Ernst and her husband, Edmund Spivack, knew she was the right person to help them blend their households.

"We were taken by what appeared to be a great knowledge of art, furnishings, antiques and color," Ernst says. And that was key, as they were combining important contemporary and period art with antiques,

two houses' worth of furniture, an extensive wine collection and two grand pianos, along with two children, in a large home in Potomac.

Fast-forward to 2012, and they needed her again, this time after the children moved out, and the couple found themselves spending more time at a home in Florida. They purchased a penthouse at the new Turnberry Tower in Arlington, with sweeping views of the Potomac River and Georgetown. The



MIXED MEDIA
Clockwise from left: Designer Lisa Bartolomei blended aesthetic styles and generations in her clients' penthouse, including a classic Steinway in the living room; a glassed-in wine collection; Barbara Kruger's cutting-edge photography.

space also featured tall ceilings and wide expanses of walls that could accommodate their massive works of art.

"We saw the walls and knew our art would be so happy here," Ernst says. But placing it correctly, and choosing which furnishings to keep from the Potomac house, was a job for Bartolomei, who worked in concert with Flora Kanter of ArtSPACE Management.

"We had to create an environment that would easily accept 300-year-old pieces next to 2-year-old pieces," Bartolomei says of a collection that includes Fernand Léger, Frank Stella and Sol LeWitt, among others.

The crossover from Potomac was not difficult because key furnishings were neutral, with strong accents pulled from the colors of the art.

"When you design the whole house, you tend to have a similar color palette throughout, so it's easier to reuse things and repurpose them," Bartolomei says. "I want to make sure there's a consistent feel as you walk through the house, so it doesn't look like a decorator's show house."

Bartolomei then got to work on several structural elements in the apartment to make everything in it look as if it was purchased for that space.

First, she specified warm walnut flooring for many of the rooms (the Turnberry penthouses were sold without flooring so homeowners could choose their own). Then she added a partial wall between the kitchen and living room, to hold one of the couple's paintings and also to formalize the living area by separating it from the working kitchen.

The open plan still makes the kitchen visible from different angles, so Bartolomei eliminated the bland-looking granite that came with the apartment and replaced it with a more vivid pattern that would stand up to the drama of the Snaidero cabinetry and the art in the surrounding areas.

The effect of her work creates three distinct spaces for the living room, dining area and kitchen, yet the monumental works of art that anchor each wall mingle energetically.

"You can sit on the couch in the living room and see three pieces of art," Ernst says. "You have so many different views here,

"We had to create an environment that would easily accept 300-year-old pieces next to 2-year-old pieces."

— LISA BARTOLOMEI, INTERIOR DESIGNER





CURATOR IN CHIEF
 From Top: Lisa Bartolomei transferred mostly neutral furnishings from her clients' previous home to serve as a backdrop; Bartolomei stands before an oversized John Galliano model painted by DC native Lisa Reuter.



which is something you don't get when you're in a house divided by rooms."

Of course, houses have rooms for wine cellars. But that didn't confound Bartolomei in the penthouse, as she carved out a wine-storage area for her clients by eliminating the powder room and made it into a piece of art by enclosing it with a glass door.

She also enclosed an open den area with wood-framed glass panels to create a family room that could double as an additional guest suite. The glass allows a view toward Barbara Kruger's dramatic photo collage above the sectional, but creates privacy for Spivack to read when Ernst is rehearsing.

Ernst wasn't able to transport both pianos to the apartment, but one of the Steinways occupies a place of honor in the living room, its lid propped up to reveal internal workings of gold and red ribbons.

"That's my office right there," says Ernst, a performer who is often seen onstage at The Kennedy Center and is currently completing her fifth CD. "When I'm getting ready for

[a performance], I love to have friends over, make dinner and play through the pieces."

An ottoman placed underneath the piano can be pulled out for those extra guests—it had been in the master bedroom at the Potomac House. The seating in the rest of the living room is also repurposed—some from the other living room, some from the other great room—but Bartolomei refreshed it all with a new rug underneath.

Also refreshing, says Ernst, are the new surroundings, which are so high above the city that they can't hear anything below.

"It's very peaceful, even though there's a lot of hustle and bustle going on outside," says Ernst. "You don't feel that in this penthouse, and it's even more spectacular at night—it's like a giant tree house."

With a sensory separation from the world outside, Ernst adds, Bartolomei's deft hand with the artwork and furnishings gets all the more focus. "She really added a lot of elegance to the space that wasn't here before." ■