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HAUTE HOUSTON

WRITTEN BY CAREN KURLANDER
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"IT REALLY STARTED WITH THE ART," RANDY POWERS SAYS OF THE HOUSTON CONDO HE DESIGNED FOR MANDY WILLIAMS. "She has a first-rate collection, and that needed to be the focus." Powers and Williams were introduced through their mutual art dealer, Robert McClain, and the pairing couldn't have been a better fit. Aside from creating sophisticated interiors through his Houston-based firm J. Randall Powers Interior Decoration, and designing furniture sold through David Iatesta and lighting for Visual Comfort, Powers is a passionate art collector. He understood how to approach his client's works by artists like Helen Frankenthaler, Brice Marden and Julian Schnabel. "The first thing we did was decide which piece would go where," Powers explains, "and we filled in from there. But it was also about creating an environment that's comfortable and livable, because at the end of the day, it's not a museum, it's a home."

Before they could place anything, the 2,800-square-foot high-rise condo needed some attention. Williams, a retired oil executive, amateur racecar driver and first-time author, knew she wanted a tailored space with clean lines, and she called on designer Wayne Braun from the architectural firm PDR Corporation in Houston and contractor Kurt Lobpries of Houston's Builders West to make this happen. "The place had yellow oak floors and crown molding," says Williams. "Everything had a Renaissance flavor to it, which is fine unless you lean toward

INTERIOR DESIGN Randy Powers, J. Randall Powers Interior Decoration

INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE Wayne Braun, PDR Corporation

HOME BUILDER Kurt Lobpries, Builders West

BEDROOMS 1 **BATHROOMS** 2 **SQUARE FEET** 2,800



ART HOUSE

The Flats, a 1968 acrylic by Helen Frankenthaler, hangs above a commode from Mulholland Furniture in the living area.

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contemporary styling." Keeping the one-bedroom layout, Braun stripped the embellishments, removed walls, expanded openings and designed sleek accent walls in a grid of wenge for the main living/dining room.

Once the architecture was settled, Powers set a quiet tone for the interiors. "I didn't want to compete with the art," he says. "Plus, she has a spectacular view of downtown Houston." He gave the floors a cool blue-gray finish throughout and decided on a palette of pale taupes for the living area. "I rarely use pattern, as I find it disruptive," he explains. "Instead, I look to create interest through texture." A Helen Frankenthaler acrylic faces the sitting area, where Powers chose soft leathers and tactile linens to cover a sofa he designed after a Jean-Michel Frank original and chairs by Holly Hunt and Donghia. A flatweave Stark rug grounds the space, while the wenge wall grid lends warmth.



INSTANT CLASSIC

Randy Powers used a muted palette for the living area of Mandy Williams' condo as not to distract from the artwork or view of downtown Houston. A Stark rug, linen files from Mokum, and tailored furnishings in Holly Hunt and Donghia keep the space feeling luxe.



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On the opposite end of the room, a large-scale Larry Poons painting is positioned in the dining area. A wenge wall grid mirrors its counterpart in the living area, but function sets it apart. Push-button hardware opens the individual panels to reveal Williams' computer, printer and other office equipment. "You never have enough space in a high-rise, so I wanted to maximize every inch," she says. A custom dining table with a leather-upholstered base doubles as a desk when the grid panels are opened. Powers completed the design with Donghia's Ghost chairs and a custom Holly Hunt pendant.

To keep a cohesive feel throughout the condo, Powers wrapped the master bedroom in muted colors and decadent materials. "I took a cue from

COOLING OFF

The European-style kitchen was streamlined with new cabinet doors, black honed-granite countertops and a steely blue-gray hue selected by Powers. Swaim bar chairs are upholstered with Rose Tarlow suede, and the refrigerator is by Sub-Zero.



ON DISPLAY

Julian Schnabel's 2006 *Huntington Beach to Punta Sal Puedas* is positioned above a Holly Hunt bench in the living area. Williams worked with New York art consultant Julie Kinzelman to develop her collection.



STYLE SELECTION

Artist Al Held created this piece in 1969 using India ink on paper. *F Series IV*, price available upon request; dkgallery.com

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Jean-Michel Frank for the walls," says Powers, who had a shimmery hand-painted silk wall covering cut into squares and hung at perpendicular angles. "It looks like a wall of limestone, and it gives the space a lot of depth." A Cameron Collection bed is dressed with Rogers & Goffigon cashmere, and Powers had a plush Stark rug specially woven in cotton and cashmere.

"A high-rise by definition is going to be cold," says Williams. "It's a lot of glass and walls. So it was truly a challenge to soften it up." But between Braun's addition of the rich wenge walls and Powers' use of clean-lined furnishings sheathed in textural fabrics, the space feels elegant and inviting. "It was a jigsaw puzzle for everybody," says Williams. "But they pulled it off." **L**



TONED DOWN

Powers outfitted the master bedroom with layers of rich textures to play off the large windows. A hand-painted silk wall covering from Silk Dynasty and a Cameron Collection bed dressed with Rogers & Goffigon cashmere soften the space. The two 1960 ink-on-paper works, 60-9 and 60-10, are by Al Held.