



GRAND, ENTIRE HOUSE OVER \$1,000,000

CLEAN SLATE

A thorough makeover in the Watergate sheds vestiges of the past for a fresh, modern vibe

Text by SHARON JAFFE DAN | Photography by BOB NAROD



BEFORE PHOTOS



A couple with grown kids decided to trade their large DC home for a condo in the Watergate. They were enticed by the landmark building's enviable location and its dramatic Potomac River views. But the heavy, gilded décor in their 11th-story unit? Not so much.

They approached BOWA, a design/build firm that had already completed a handful of updates in the complex, to bring their interiors into the 21st century with modern finishes and an improved, open floor plan that would accentuate vistas of the Georgetown waterfront.

Though a previous renovation had combined two apartments into the one they purchased, the result was far from desirable. "It was a very disjointed, half-hearted effort," says BOWA principal Steve Kirstein. "Our clients knew immediately that it had to be a clean slate. We gutted all the walls, the piping, the electrical. Everything was redone, soup to nuts."

The husband also knew exactly what he wanted, describing a precise vision he had developed for the reworked layout at initial design meetings with Kirstein and architect David Shove-Brown of //3877. "David and I took the owner's concept and turned it into a buildable plan," Kirstein recalls. "But it was a very complicated project."

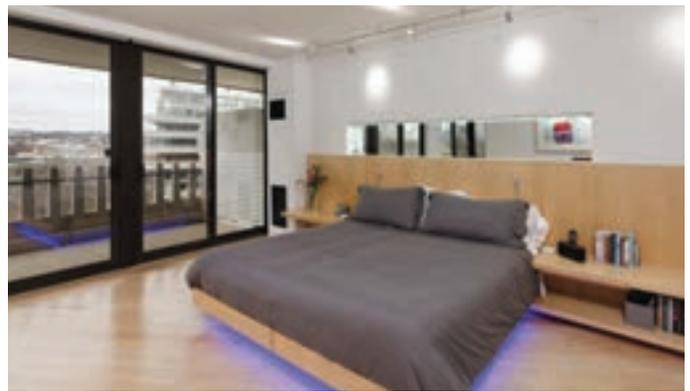
Renovation Architecture: **David Shove-Brown**, //3877, Washington, DC. Design/Build: **Steve Kirstein**, principal; **John Murray**, production manager, **Craig Manning**, project manager, BOWA, McLean, Virginia. Custom Millwork Fabrication: Woods and Style, Gaithersburg, Maryland.



Designed for effortless entertaining, the open kitchen, dining and living areas (this page and opposite, top) feature rift-maple floors and custom cabinetry fabricated by Woods and Style. Clean, modern elements, from the Caesarstone countertops to the stainless-steel Miele appliances and HomeWorks lighting system, replaced the home's dated fixtures, as shown in the existing living room and kitchen (opposite, bottom).

The makeover would give the kitchen, which was crammed into one end of the existing condo, a prominent presence in the center of the home, open to a spacious living and dining area. A new guest room and bathroom would occupy the space that had previously been the kitchen, while the master bathroom would also move to make way for a large dressing room in a luxurious master suite. The efficient plan also called for a library, a home office and a guest sitting room with a Murphy bed—all of which would enjoy views of the river.

“The owners wanted to live toward the exterior, near the glass walls of the residence. That meant we had to get working plumbing into the far reaches of the project where none had existed before, and we had to make it work in conjunction with the building and code,” Kirstein explains. “We achieved that



Stripped of its ornate molding and chandeliers (below, right), the modern master bedroom (above) enjoys a bird's-eye view of the Georgetown waterfront. The renovation replaced the library's heavy millwork and coffered ceiling (below, left) with a new shelf partition that separates the office (left) and library without blocking views. The contemporary master bath (bottom, left) boasts heated porcelain-tile floors, Caesarstone countertops and a glass-enclosed shower. A hallway (bottom, right) reveals custom pocket doors and built-in storage.

through some pretty creative uses of the millwork.”

A careful study of previous renovations revealed an old plumbing stack. BOWA got permission to rebuild it, which helped bring plumbing to the new kitchen.

Running a construction site on the 11th story of a luxury building full of residents presented another challenge. “You need to be very organized because you’re shutting down whole tiers of plumbing, electrical and phone within the building, impacting everyone who lives above and below,” Kirstein remarks. During the process, fixtures, appliances and building materials were salvaged and either recycled or donated to The ReBuild Warehouse in Springfield, Virginia.

Throughout the completed residence, pale rift-maple flooring and crisp, custom cabinetry, also in maple, set a light and airy tone. In lieu of a series of walled-in rooms, open spaces delineated by millwork partitions that don’t block the residence’s curving wall of windows improve circulation and create dramatic sight lines indoors and out. A Home-Works lighting system and automated Lutron window shades enable the owners to adjust light levels with ease. All exterior glass was replaced with new windows, boosting energy efficiency.

Admitting that he had never before worked with a client who had such a



clear vision for a remodel, Steve Kirstein reflects, “When I first met him, I thought, ‘There’s no way we’re going to be able to pull this thing off.’ But we kept at it and, sure enough, by the time we had everything figured out, we got it all to work.”

The owners are thrilled with their new home and never tire of the scenery unfolding below. “The Watergate has unparalleled views,” marvels Kirstein. “When you’re up there and all of a sudden a helicopter comes down the river below you, it’s just wild.” ■