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November 2007

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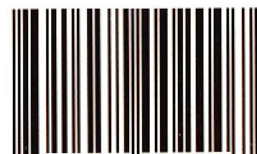


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HOME SWEET CONDO

By Terri Chance





Your home is what you make it, and in the case of this penthouse condominium, this dwelling appears to be a palace - fit for a king.

Ron Krantz, who lives the Marina Condominiums in Madison, Wisc., a 14-story structure overlooking downtown Madison and Monona Lake. Each of Marina's privately-owned residence were designed and decorated as a reflection of the individual homeowner, but in the case of the top floor, Krantz wanted to make his dream home a reality. He hired Brownhouse Designs to help him realize that dream.







Brownhouse, located in Madison, is a full-service architectural and design firm for Marina Condominiums, and provided much of the architecture and interior designs for the project.

Owner Laurel McManus Brown says her firm has designed all but one of the residences in the building, which range from the sleek and modern to classic and traditional. But in the case of Krantz's dream dwelling, Brown says, "This was a fantasy job," adding that while Krantz was involved in every detail of the build-out and design, in many ways he gave her creative carte blanche for the 4,000 square-foot penthouse.



Starting with nothing

The project took two years; almost nine months of that was in pre-planning, working on the design, décor and layout of the rooms.

"This was a 'white box' when we started," Brown explains, "just an empty shell." Krantz occupies two side-by-side "empty shells" constructed into one large dwelling.

Krantz and Brown put their heads together and began the process of turning the white box into a masculine masterpiece. Everything in the home is

brand new, "from the bookends, to the sheets, towels, everything," Brown says.

As the walls were going up and rooms were being created, electricity, plumbing and flooring were being installed according to where Brown and Krantz would carefully place every piece of furniture and every painting on the walls.

"It required a lot of coordination," she says. "On our first furniture buying trip to High Point, N.C., as we were making selections, we could tweak little things about the floor plan. If we discovered we needed to raise an electrical outlet

to hide behind a tapestry we were purchasing, we could do that. Or we could add extra blocking to a wall if we were going to hang a heavy piece on it."

The molding – some 28 different pieces, Brown estimates – came from White River Hardwoods, based in Fayetteville, Ark. A 28-piece package is huge, Brown says; "something you might find at a large estate."

Once the molding was produced, it was sent to the cabinet maker to match the finishes of the cabinetry throughout the unit.



Modern technology

The entire home can literally be run electronically, via remote control. From music, to lighting, heat and window treatments, Krantz is able to make changes – even if he's across town.

"With his integrated electronics system," Brown explains, "he can call on his phone and turn on the air conditioning or raise or lower the blinds before he even gets home. It's all automated."

The contractor on the job, interviewed and selected after a national search by Krantz and Brown, was Brian Buss, of Buss Construction. With his help and craftsmanship, Brown says she was able to ask for those changes during the building process.

"Buss was wonderful, wonderful," she says.







Jazzing it up

The three bedroom, four bath home is perfect – down to every detail, Brown claims, “and Brownhouse was 100 percent responsible for all of it.”

Italian marble can be found in almost every room, including in the tiny mosaic tiles on the master bathroom walls.

As Krantz, with Brown’s help, decided on the marble colors and placement, the stone was ordered directly from Walker Zanger, whose stone comes from Italy. It was then cut to specification and sent to the States. The marble had to make

two separate trips through customs before being released for the condo.

The ceiling in one of the guest bathrooms goes beyond marble, revealing genuine mother of pearl. Brown says the products is usually placed on the walls, but “we put it on the ceilings to jazz it up.”

The floors throughout the residence are reclaimed mahogany, indicating the wood was once part of something else – another building - which Brown believes makes the floors even more beautiful and special.

The process of simultaneously designing the layout, purchasing furniture, building and decorating is not a common one, according to Brown. In most cases the architecture is handled by one firm, furniture by another and the interior design by still another. But Brown says doing this particular job was a lot of fun, adding that the complexity of this type of project is what Brownhouse Designs is known for. She calls it second nature.

“There are just certain steps you have to take to get the job done. “It’s all swirling around in my brain at the same time.”

