

PARADISE LOFT

MET HOME OF THE MONTH
A **SAN ANTONIO** ART LOVER
TRANSFORMED PART OF AN OLD
CANDY FACTORY INTO THE
ULTIMATE MINIMALIST SPACE TO
DISPLAY HER COLLECTION.



||| This unapologetically spare, nearly white home occupies the top two floors and the roof of an 80-year-old red-brick building. Left: A neatly symmetrical seating arrangement consists of a Kevin Walz sofa (through Ralph Pucci) and a B&B Italia's *George* chairs by Antonio Citterio. The ball of pencils sculpture above the fireplace is by the Art Guys; the wall hanging "Strudi Flooo" (at far left of the room) is by Trenton Doyle Hancock.





*** key to the Style**

- Custom paint color throughout (grayish white)
- High-gloss epoxy floors
- Simple architectural details in classic materials
- Modern furniture in compatible shades of gray
- Geometric seating groups anchored by rugs
- Sculptural side tables and lighting fixtures
- Sheer, simple window treatments



WHEN ARE THE SUBURBS OF SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS, NOT THE RIGHT PLACE FOR A SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR?

When she's a major patron of the arts, a noted collector and an artist in her own right who didn't have room to store her art. Characteristic of contemporary work, some of her prized canvases are massive, and some of the sculptural pieces have to be suspended from a ceiling. Physically, emotionally and aesthetically, her traditional house outside town was an inadequate venue - for both the collection and its owner.

"I wanted a place to live where I could see my art," she says. "I felt awkward living in a fancy subdivision. I needed to live in the city and to feel something I wasn't feeling in that other environment."

So in 2001, when a disused candy factory became available in a derelict warehouse district between I-35 and the San Antonio River, she was excited. Clad in brick, with cast-stone accents, the six-story building was erected in 1926. A handsome reminder of the city's past,

it was just waiting for a smart modification in the 21st century.

"I had always admired that building," says the collector. When she walked in, admiration blossomed into love. The developer, who was having second thoughts, had already gutted all the floors. "We could easily see the beauty of the space," she remembers. Thousands of square feet of nothing but bare floors and walls stretched before her; steel-framed windows wrapped the space and flooded it with light. Concrete columns, set on a 22-foot grid, looked like the ultra-modern versions of Corinthian pillars. The businesswoman in her made a bold decision: She bought the building.

Above: The open dining room features a modular table, Eero Saarinen Tulip chairs and a David Weeks chandelier. The yellow painting is by Arturo Herrera, the shelflike installation by Josiah McElheny. **Opposite:** The smaller seating area includes a Moore sofa from Minotti, an Apt chair from Maxalto and a classic Arco lamp by the Castiglioni brothers; the yellow painting is another Herrera; the wall-hung sculpture is by Anthony Gormley.

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THE COLLECTOR CLAIMED the top two floors for herself: The fifth would be her home, the sixth an expansive art gallery. A large roof garden with a deck and a small pool would top off the place and command views of the city. To finish off her raw square footage, the enterprising art lover settled on San Antonio-based architect Jim Poteet, who had renovated other lofts in near-downtown neighborhoods. “I visited a couple of them,” she says, “and they were so minimal and clean, and I thought, This is exactly what I want.”

Poteet had worked with Austin architect Patrick Ousey on those lofts and called on him to join the team. “We work well together,” says Poteet, “and besides, it’s more fun to work with a partner.” As for the interiors, it was a given that the homeowner would choose San Antonio decorator Courtney Walker. “We’ve been friends since we were girls,” she says, “and Courtney has helped me on other houses.”

“The client wanted a clean space that didn’t distract from her collection,” says Ousey. “The whole project was really all about light.” The plan called for an open space on the shorter, east-west axis of the building, with a dining area set between seating groups at each wall of windows. “That way we could get the most light in there all day long,” Ousey says. The master bedroom would be located at the north end of the loft, the kitchen at the center.

Another early design decision set the tone for the job: “We resurfaced the concrete floors, which had been irretrievably damaged from the years of abuse,” notes Poteet, “in an industrial-grade white epoxy, the kind often used in airport hangars.”

Left (from top): Architects Patrick Ousey (left) and Jim Poteet; an open terrace with Paola Lenti seating through Scott + Cooner in Austin and large ceramic vessels by Jorge Pardo. Right: A zigguratted steel staircase leads from the open lounge area outside the kitchen to the upper (gallery) floor. The painting above the bar is by Joan Mitchell, the small sculpture by Niki de St. Palle; ceramic bowls are by Alex de leon.







THE IMPACT OF the lustrous epoxy floor was powerful: “Until we got furniture in here,” says the owner, “the light bounced off the floor so much we practically had to wear sunglasses.” Modulated with sheer window shades, the result is a room lively with illumination as if from an unseen source.

For terrace doorways, the architects chose steel-framed glass and “tweaked the standard white they came in,” says Oursey. “We developed a color we call Camp Street White.” Tinted with a whisper of gray, the shadowy nuance became the basis for the subtle tonal shifts throughout the loft. Walls are drywall because “the owner changes her artwork frequently and drywall is easy to repair,” Poteet says.

To anchor a few of the seating areas, the team chose plush gray rugs, the darkest to go under the dining table modules designed by Oursey. The dining room is the scene of frequent family dinners and charity events, as well as salons hosted by the homeowner. Furniture

selection throughout was deliberately straightforward - most of it modern, Italian and rigorously neutral. “We upholstered furniture in shades of white instead of gray in the bedroom,” notes Poteet, “but introduced more color in the art and furnishings.” There, a midnight blue coffee table and orange footstools achieve maximum clarity against the bright white walls.

The sheer, nearly white envelope of the loft offers both guests and the homeowner a sense of amply space in which to appreciate the art. “I’ve lived in about 12 other houses,” she says by way of summary, “but this is the first one that feels like me.”

Above: In the sitting room of the owner’s private quarters, shoji-like screens made of Corian frame the fireplace and create a sense of privacy. Furniture includes and Arne Jacobsen Egg chair, Paola Lenti cubes and an Yves Klein coffee table; paintings are by Byron Kim, the wall hanging (rear) by Arturo Herrera. **Opposite:** In the library, an antique Italian table meets an Eames lounge chair; doors by Jorge Pardo open onto an Yves Klein “Blue Venus.”



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DETAILS

1 To minimize the railings, landscaper designer John Ahrens stacked three tiers of planters to intervene between the roof deck and the edge of the building. The decking is made of rich red ipé wood.

2 The custom fireplaces are made from painted plaster, stainless steel and crushed glass to keep them as neutral as possible: “The fire itself is the focal point,” says Jim Poteet.

3 Siding made of Cor-Ten, an unfinished steel, mimics the deep red hue of the building’s original brick facade. A white-painted aluminum-and-steel trellis breaks the sun’s impact by day, turns silvery in the reflection of lights and night and pays homage to the building’s landmark water tower.

4 Arriving guests disembark from the elevator into a foyer that opens into the main living space. Josiah McElheny’s installation “Charlotte Perriand, Carlos Scarpa, Others (White)” is a tongue-in-cheek take on traditional display shelving.

5 The kitchen is the only windowless room in the loft, so Patrick Ousey created a sense of antic light with three Verneer Pantone *Fun I* chandeliers that catch the sun from a skylight. Countertops are Corian, but the architects designed the island from seamless terrazzo - with tiny hunks of embedded glass for subtle texture. Cabinets are from Poliform, Bertioia barstools from Knoll.

6 The understated drama in the master bathroom comes from the play of light on different planes: matte drywall, an opaque glass shower door and a tub surround and wainscoting made of Corian.



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