

HOME & LIVING

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# Depth of perception

"It is important that an art collection doesn't overwhelm an interior. An interior should hold its own while still encouraging a sense of connection to objects within the space."

*Tim Alt, architect, Altus Architecture + Design*





# Light maneuvers

Movement of light through space creates a common bond between the sculpture-like interior and the artwork in this condominium

Architectural design is considered an art form and buildings often reflect this creative expression. However, the need to create a functioning environment within suggests that practicality is also important in shaping an overall design aesthetic.

In this new 6400sq ft condominium, the interior needed to be practical but artistic enough to seamlessly incorporate an

extensive art collection. Architect Tim Alt, of Altus Architecture + Design, aimed to develop a common language for the interior and the artwork. The result is a series of open but defined areas that combine to create an art space that is also a home.

"We decided to insert objects into the space to create a sense of continuity throughout, rather than of separated rooms. This allows the components of

the house and the art to coexist as free elements within one large space," the architect says.

Walls, cabinetry, fireplaces and even bathrooms are designed as separate objects that appear to be placed in the house rather than constructed. Many of the objects exhibit artistic or sculptural qualities that liken them to the pieces of art on display throughout the space.

*Preceding pages:* The interior of this condominium is designed to complement the art housed within.

*Above:* Floor-to-ceiling glazing lets in an abundance of natural light, which filters through the house.

*Facing page:* A woven steel mesh screen is also a movable partition and conveys sculptural qualities.





Alt used a combination of what he describes as masses, edges and planes to create these inserts. Masses are defined as solid permanent structures, and edges as fixed but semi-permanent elements. Planes are similar to edges but are free-standing or floating, and appear as temporary installations. Each uses materials specific to its function.

"I've used materials that convey an inherent quality and can speak to the surrounding environment," he says.

A floating partition finished in marble

dust plaster is used to shape a hallway and delineate rooms to one side. It is suspended below ceiling height and above the floor giving the impression of being temporary and even movable – a floating canvas.

Adjacent to this, a wall finished in marble dust plaster folds around a column and floats in a similar way. These are used as spaces for hanging artwork. As planes they have large smooth surfaces.

Approaching the main living area, there is a curved, mobile screen which

appears to cradle a grand piano. The screen is made of woven stainless steel, is see-through and is suspended from rails recessed into the ceiling. It has artistic appeal and appears to be a display, as well as being a barrier between the piano and the kitchen and dining areas.

These partitions allow natural light to filter through to the spaces and rooms beyond them maintaining a feeling of connection despite the physical divisions they create.

"We wanted to make light movement



through the floor span as uninhibited as possible, creating the perception of a continuous space.”

Storage cabinets are placed throughout the home. In some areas, they are used like walls. Finished either in curly maple or eucalyptus wood, their thickness suggests solidity and that they are semi-permanent objects fixed within the free-flowing space. Their doors are flush making each cabinet appear to be a large integrated piece of furniture.

One bank of cabinetry acts as a wall

between an informal seating area and the kitchen. Stainless steel appliances are inset into this cabinetry. Stainless steel is also used on the kitchen countertops and top drawers.

The kitchen is angled away from the main living area. A translucent partition that slides across to seal off the kitchen is providing privacy when needed without totally closing off the space.

Glass cases in the kitchen are mounted in front of full-height windows and house mainly glass objects. Sunlight shines

*Facing page, top:* Kitchenware is placed on glass shelving or in glass cabinetry backlit by natural light. Many of these objects are made of glass.

*Facing page, above:* The full-height glazing spans the length of the building, allowing maximum views and natural light. Fireplaces throughout the home are contained in pillar-like structures which extend from floor to ceiling.

*Above:* The kitchen faces away from the main living area, and a sliding door can close it off completely. Cupboard doors are flush-mounted to make the cabinetry appear as a single large block.



through creating a sparkling display.

Columns are exposed throughout the house. They are finished in marble dust plaster and on the whole are unadorned. In some places, cabinetry is built around them, while in others they stand as reminders of their necessity to the structure of the building.

These columns pierce through the floor and ceiling appearing solid, permanent and unmoving. Ceilings and wooden floors are revealed back to emphasize the importance of these primary structural elements.

Two larger masses finished in a textured Beisanz limestone provide wall space to display artwork. They form one side of the main pathway that extends from the main living area to a bathroom at the other end.

Sliding doors are used to close off the more private areas. Though when opened, they allow adjacent spaces to remain connected.

"It is possible to be sitting at the dining table and be able to see the bathtub at the other end of the house," Alt says.







The bathrooms continue the themes presented in other living areas. In one bathroom, a shelf full of shoes is backed with full-height, translucent glass, proudly displaying them like objects of art.

Cabinetry in both bathrooms is constructed the same way as in other parts of the condominium. Similar feelings of refinement are conveyed through the use of smooth flush surface areas.

A stainless steel tub continues the theme of free elements combining to make up a whole. The toilet and shower

*Facing page, top and lower:* Floating partitions on one side of the corridor appear as transient objects rather than as walls, yet on the other side a full-height wall contrasts with its solidity and suggestion of permanence. Art is displayed on the walls and shelving and are lit by downlights, most of which are recessed into the ceiling.

*Above and left:* The family room creates warmth through soft furnishings such as rugs, couches and pillows. A fireplace and TV cabinet continue the theme of objects being inserted into the space. Glass above the shelving unit and full-height sliding doors seal off the study from the family room.



**Top and above right:** Elements in this bathroom, such as the steel tub, are freestanding. A curved, partial-height block structure containing a shower and toilet functions as a room within a room, one of few areas of total privacy.

**Above:** The shower and toilet in this bathroom are contained within a partial-height block wrapped in limestone, a rendering that signifies solidity. The thick cabinetry is walnut, and is similar to freestanding furniture pieces.

**Right:** This guest bathroom echoes the curves found in her bathroom and the screen in the living area.

are also freestanding, housed in a partial-height curved block, that is finished in vein-cut limestone. The continuous lines on the block help make it appear as a single large insert, and it is one of the few areas in the house that is totally closed off and private.

"The overall design is really about a communication between a series of impromptu relaxation spaces, the goal being to make them open and transparent in order to enhance the connection of the objects within," Alt says.





**Architects:** Tim Ait, AIA, ASID, Chad Healy, Roger Cummelin, AIA, Tammy Angaran, AIA, and Carl Olson, Altus Architecture + Design (Minneapolis, MN)

**Interior designer:** Theodore Hanson, T Hanson & Associates

**Builder:** Streeter & Associates

**Structural engineer:** Stroh Engineering

**Kitchen manufacturer:** Peter Allen Company

**Internal doors:** Custom curly maple and quartered walnut with FSB levers

**Steel screen:** GKD woven stainless steel from Custom Stainless Steel Inc

**Wallcoverings:** Silk by J Robert Scott

**Paint:** Sherwin Williams

**Plastering:** Otto Painting Design

**Stone:** Beisanz limestone and New York bluestone from Nelson Masonry

**Lighting:** Delta Light, LBL Lighting, Leucos Lighting, Cooper Lighting from Citillights

**Flooring:** Stained white oak hardwood flooring from Anderson Ladd; custom carpet from T Hanson & Associates; cork flooring from Natural Cork Company

**Heating:** In-floor radiant heating from Metropolitan Mechanical Contractors

**Home audio:** Master Media

**Blinds:** Roller shades from Contemporary Blinds

**Kitchen cabinets:** Peter Allen Company

**Faucets:** KWC Supremo

**Sink, countertops and backsplash:** Integral stainless steel

**Oven and warming drawer:** Wolf

**Cooktops and hood:** Gaggenau

**Refrigerator and wine chiller:** Sub-Zero

**Dishwashers:** Miele, Fisher & Paykel DishDrawer

**Bathtub:** Japanese soaking tub with Vetrosystems

**Ulisse floor spout:** from Diamond Spas

**Toilets:** Duravit

**Basins:** Kohler

**Faucets and accessories:** Vola

**Shower fittings:** Hansgrohe

**Photography by Tom Henry**