



TWO AREA DESIGNERS WORK THEIR MAGIC ON  
SIMILAR UNITS IN A NEW BOSTON HIGH-RISE, GIVING  
EACH DWELLING A UNIQUE AND BEAUTIFUL LOOK.

## SUPER MODELS

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INTERIOR DESIGN: DENNIS DUFFY AND MANUEL DE SANTAREN | PRODUCED BY KYLE HOEPNER

**Y**ou'd never expect two artists given identical lumps of clay to create works of art that were the same. So how about two interior designers working in nearly identical spaces? | A new, thirty-two-story residential high-rise near Boston's Downtown Crossing gave two of the city's best-known designers similar canvases when it asked them each to design a model



condominium at 45 Province. Armed with furnishings, artwork and fabric, Dennis Duffy and Manuel de Santaren gave their twists on Boston urban living.

The 132-unit building, designed by Cambridge-based Bruner/Cott & Associates, features floor-to-ceiling windows and sleek, lacquered kitchen cabinetry. It was developed by the Abbey Group, whose nearly 100 projects include Boston's Landmark Center as well as Seasons on Vermont's Mount Snow. As for the interiors, the two designers used similar approaches, but the end result reflects each man's unique vision.

Duffy, who also owns the South End retail space and custom furniture showroom D Scale, is practically an old hand at model designs, but location set this project apart. "It's the center of Boston's urban center, a high-rise, not just an apartment complex," says Duffy. "The goal of a model apartment is to continue the branding message, but then to make it livable."

De Santaren had long shied away from model apartments because he believed most developers lacked vision beyond the expected. "That wasn't the case here," he says.

Without a specific client to design for, Duffy and de Santaren imagined their ideal homeowners, both concluding they would be a well-traveled couple with a great appreciation for the arts.

"It's a new area of town in terms of residential living, so in my mind it was an adventurous couple from a different part of the world or empty nesters looking for excitement," says de Santaren. "I wanted that to come through in the furnishings and art."

From the mezzanine in the Duffy-designed space, the eye is drawn down to the bold, graphic line that twirls across the large wool rug anchoring the living room below. From eighteen feet above the living space, one could feel a little lost in the great vertical volume

**ABOVE:** Susan Schwalb's art sets off a neutral palette in the Duffy-designed study. **LEFT:** The open space is anchored with graphic elements. **PREVIOUS PAGE:** Straight lines paired with curves combine softness with urban sophistication.



and looming city views, but Duffy cleverly grounds visitors in the space by mounting three huge metal panels on the end wall. “The panels provide a

sculptural moment on the wall, but it’s not overwhelming,” Duffy says.

Simple lines in the furnishings and a consistent palette of warm browns in



the leather sofa, custom coffee table and curvilinear armchair keep the room clean and the focus on the view.

On the mezzanine Duffy created an office/living space with a low-backed, modern white sofa and stainless steel cocktail tables. “The color here sets everything apart,” Duffy says of the warm beige wall behind the sitting area.

Above the sofa hang two Susan Schwalb mixed-media pieces that Duffy selected with fine art consultant Jacqueline Becker. “I needed the art to bring life to the space,” says Duffy. “I wanted it to bring color and dimension in some areas and quiet others.”

De Santaren allowed fine art to drive design in his eighteenth-floor space, using museum-quality pieces from his personal collection. A photography aficionado who serves on committees at the Guggenheim Museum and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, de Santaren started with a large-scale work by photographer Vik Muniz in the study. “The art was more important than anything else,” says de Santaren. “I wanted to give it the importance it needed.”

Behind the photograph, a deep brown wall sets the tone with drama and warmth. “The wall color reminds me of chocolate ganache,” says de Santaren. “It has an edible quality to it.”

Under the photograph, the designer chose an armless modern sofa to go with the late 1960s Knoll end table and a custom cocktail table of his own design. “For me, modern furnishings were a natural choice,” he says.

De Santaren’s earthy hues extend throughout the public rooms, mixing with textures as varied as cowhide, cashmere and linen. In the living room, a 1960s Dunbar sofa sits perpendicular to the windows, facing a vintage Koford Larsen piece that serves as a media cabinet. A flash of color—aubergine—appears in an oversize cashmere pillow and matching throw that de Santaren

**ABOVE:** Duffy warmed the master bedroom with stripes, a tufted headboard and artwork by Christina Lanzl. **LEFT:** Designer de Santaren’s graphic approach was built around art such as this Vik Muniz photograph above a custom sofa.



**LEFT:** Pale aqua walls and a skirted table soften the lines of the over-scale four-poster in the bedroom de Santaren designed. **BELOW:** A Mylar-ensconced chandelier floats above a lacquered resin-topped table in de Santaren's dining room.



designed. A vintage Eames chair rounds out the space.

Both men used similar colors in the master bedroom, but they created vastly different spaces. "I always try to infuse a sense of color into the master bedroom," Duffy says. "I softened the color palette, toned down the aqua and combined it with wood, glass and leather." A large painting of a horse and a biscuit-tufted headboard of roughly the same size give prominence to one wall. A dark-stained zebra wood console from the Duffy Design Limited collection sits in front of the floor-to-ceiling window. "The console provides an architectural stop for the windows," says Duffy.

In his unit, de Santaren opted for a more feminine look, using shades of pale aqua and blue. A custom four-poster bed dominates the space. "I wanted to create a room within a room," he says. "I wanted the bed to almost kiss the ceiling."

Another defining mood in de Santaren's space is what he calls "modern ironic" touches. The light fixture in the dining room is actually a giant Mylar cylinder around a traditional chandelier. Lucite chairs surround the table, and one sculptural piece from Maarten Baas's Smoke collection resides closest to the kitchen bar. "The irony here is that it's a generic Louis XV side chair and he took a blow torch to it," says de Santaren. "It harkens back to the traditionalism, but with a subversive, modern touch."

Both spaces convey a comfort with mixing traditional with modern, and both make use of a vast collection of textures to add warmth and character. "The building is infused with incredible finishes, and there's a sophistication that is carried throughout," Duffy says. "We wanted to take that sophistication and translate it into something livable." **NEH**

**RESOURCES** For information about the materials used in these projects, see page 196.