



# Boston Beacon

FOR HIS OWN HOME, ARCHITECT DAVID HACIN CREATED A SUN-FILLED PENTHOUSE THAT DOVETAILS OPEN SPACE WITH COZY INTERIOR GETAWAYS.

MET HOME SEPT/OCT 2002

**Metropolitan  
Home**  
September/October 2002



Ranks of 20-foot-high windows in the living room offer wraparound views of Boston's skyline. The sea of red brick in the distance influenced Hacin's choice of a softer, cooler palette of natural tones and materials for his interiors. A butternut maple floor provides a dramatic presentation for the clean-lined furnishings, all with exposed legs that maintain the openness of the design scheme.



rchitect David Hacin and his partner, Tim Graft (who is deputy director of the Massachusetts Film Office), were living in a typical Victorian apartment and looking for a new Boston home when Hacin met a real estate developer at a dinner party. The project on the table, so to speak, was a loft complex for those who were willing to brave what was, in the late '90s, a "dicey South End neighborhood," Hacin says.

Half of the raw spaces in the purpose-built loft project—the first such on the East Coast in more than 80 years—were to be reserved as homes and studios for working artists and subsidized by the city. Princeton- and Harvard-trained Hacin offered himself as the perfect architect for the project and wound up not only designing the entire building but living there, too.

What Hacin created were 99 units on five stories, including a penthouse floor with double-height ceilings that allowed for easy conversion into duplexes. He and Graft went one level better: They took one of the 13 topmost condos, added a second-story master suite and then a small third level in the tower at the front of the building, which houses the couple's office and Graft's music collection (in floor-to-ceiling shelves). At first, however, Graft needed some convincing.

"I wanted to live in a wide-open space," recalls Hacin, "but Tim was reluctant to give up traditional rooms and a sense of enclosure. So when it came to designing the loft, I tried to play open spaces against private spaces in a way that would please us both. Once the project was under way, Tim was all for it."



An L-shaped terrace hugs the living room walls of the first floor of the apartment; the gray steel frame of the staircase (left) captures the spirit of a loft, and the wood risers carry the warmth of the maple flooring. Opposite: Draperies are key to filtering light and absorbing sound, as well as warming the space; furniture arrangements, not walls, define the uses of the open living/dining/kitchen room.

The first innovation Hacin introduced was to raise the floor of their first story about a foot above the concrete. This not only created an acoustical barrier between the men and their downstairs neighbors, but it also proved a handy place to hide pipes, ducts and conduits. About half of the entry floor now consists of the loftlike open great room—kitchen, living and dining areas—which are defined by groupings of furniture strategically placed around the room. The only interior wall in this public part of the home is a partition that gives whoever is cooking a little kitchen privacy. It's decorated with a vintage street map of New York City.

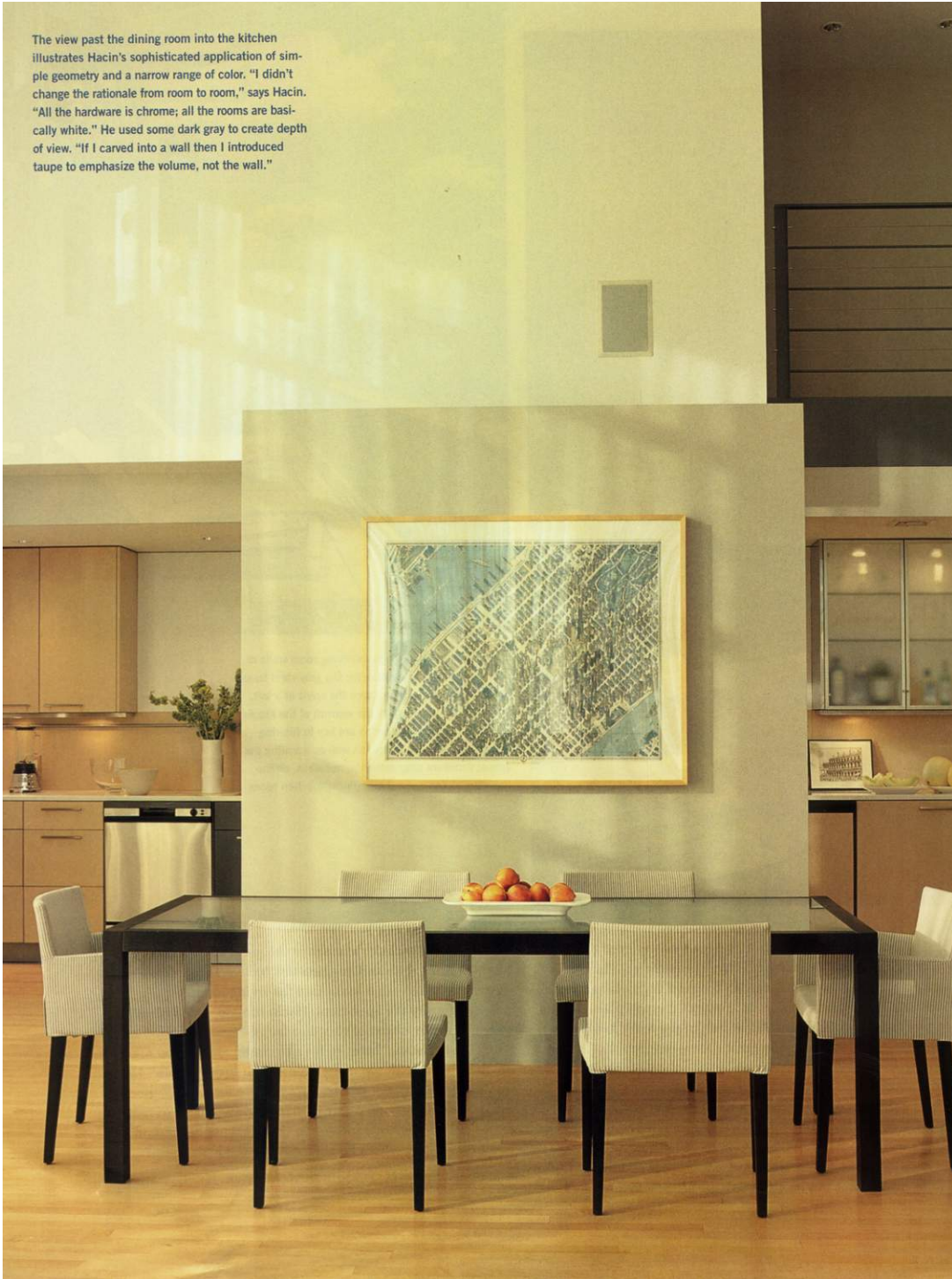
Also on the first floor are a media room and adjoining guest suite, a wing that can be closed off for privacy by pocket doors.

Hacin added a second floor above the guest and media rooms for the master suite and an open loft "conversation area"—with its own fireplace—that looks into the living room.

To help unify the apartment, Hacin limited wall and ceiling colors to white, charcoal gray and taupe. "It makes sense in a loft," says Hacin, "because it's one contiguous space. If you break it down with too many colors, you lose the loft." He used Benjamin Moore paints: Super White for most of the walls and ceilings, dark gray (#1616) and two tones of taupe for detailing (#997 everywhere in the apartment except the master bedroom, where he used #996, a shade darker).

PRODUCED BY DORETTA SPERDUTO AND DONNA PAUL. PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER MURDOCK. WRITTEN BY ANNA KASABIAN.

The view past the dining room into the kitchen illustrates Hacin's sophisticated application of simple geometry and a narrow range of color. "I didn't change the rationale from room to room," says Hacin. "All the hardware is chrome; all the rooms are basically white." He used some dark gray to create depth of view. "If I carved into a wall then I introduced taupe to emphasize the volume, not the wall."





**WHAT THE PROS  
KNOW ABOUT**

**Filtering Light**

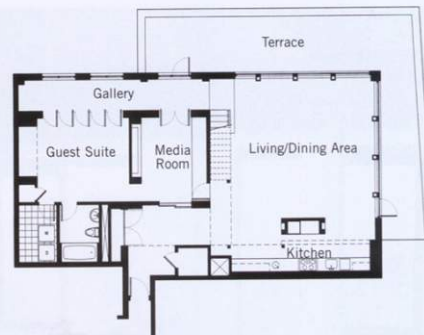
To protect fabrics and art against fading, and to lower long-term energy

costs, Hacin coated his lo-e insulated windows with a top-of-the-line filtering film called Solis (Steven Spielberg has it, and so does the AIA headquarters in Washington, D.C.). Solis is a no-tint film with silver and gold infused into the polyester. It blocks UV rays and 55 percent of heat transmission while allowing 70 percent light transmission. Those are high numbers, and the reason Solis is expensive. Carol Borow, president of CHB Industries, which supplied Hacin's Solis, estimates the cost at \$12 to \$18 per square foot installed for average residential use (professional installation is recommended). "But," says Borow, "there are many films on the market and which one you use depends on heat, light and privacy issues" (CHB Industries: 800/220-2525, [www.chbwindowfilm.com](http://www.chbwindowfilm.com))

An open bridge wraps the second floor and leads up to the third level. "I wanted to have this uneasy feeling as you walk over the bridge," Hacin says, "to create hyper-awareness. We watched *Vertigo* a lot as I planned this," he jokes. The staircase is a similar exercise in opening and closing. "It's all about letting the light in and around," says Hacin. The maple risers and treads continue the flooring from the first level, but they are strung on steel rods between the sides of the stairs with a few inches of space at their sides. "The effect is a bit like that of a runner going up the stairs," says Hacin, "only here the carpet is the stair and the stair is just space." Instead of traditional banister posts, Hacin used more industrial steel and tension wire.

Draperies too play a functional role as well as a stylish one. They not only filter the sunshine by day but absorb sound, as well, and they remind cineast Grafft of a glamorous film set or a movie-theater curtain. They also provide a soft, neutral backdrop to the furniture, which is clustered to define the rooms by use instead of walls.

"I like furniture with clean lines and distinctive shapes," says Hacin. "Each piece is restrained and different from the others. And rather than have one dominant piece, there are lots of different ones all in muted fabrics," he explains. The sofa is a re-covered piece that Hacin continues to enjoy; the side tables are from Crate & Barrel but are capped with new marble tops he designed, and the small side table in the entry is from Target. "I don't care where things come from; it's the design of the piece that counts," he says.



MAIN-FLOOR PLAN



Although the great room is all about openness, the private rooms are about enclosure. Inside the larger volume of the loft is what Hacin calls "the box," a two-story walled entity that allowed for the creation of a corridor-like gallery that catches light and ushers it into the bedrooms. Five pivot doors open from the guest room into the gallery. Upstairs, in the master bedroom, pivoting shutters act like windows that look down into the gallery. "The living room is the connection to the sky and the view," says Hacin, "and the box is all about cozy."

The ante on human comfort is upped a bit in the nostalgic pieces the men have added to their home, splicing the past with present. "The art on our walls is mostly done by friends or family," says Hacin, "and we've tacked all our travel photos and prints to the wall upstairs." An old Nelson clock on the first-floor wall is from Hacin's childhood home.

The stunning master bath contains luxe fixtures and walnut casework with a clear finish. (There is a separate room with a shower and toilet.) "The open bathroom works best if the two people are on the same schedule," says Hacin. "And you have to be the kind of person who doesn't mind having your partner around while you're soaking in the tub. I wasn't sure it would work for us, but one thing I've learned from experience is that taking a risk can yield very satisfying results." mh

See Resources, last pages.

Anna Kasabian's latest book is *First Impressions: Fresh Looks for Entryways, Hallways, and Foyers* (Rockport Publishers).



Black Vermont slate defines the space around the first-floor "box," an unusual gallery with ever-changing patterns of light. Opposite, clockwise from top left: The master bedroom, with pivoting shutters that open into the gallery for light and views; the semi-open master bath with clear-finished walnut cabinetry; the guest bedroom, which opens through pivoting doors directly into the gallery.