

House Beautiful

How A Dated Denver Penthouse Was Transformed Into the Ultimate Zen Retreat

We're losing our chill over the gorgeous kitchen range.

By [MEGHAN SHOUSE](#) | Published: NOV 16, 2023



EMILY MINTON REDFIELD

When Julee Wray, lead designer and founder of Truss Interiors, was tasked with gutting a dated, five-bedroom Denver penthouse, she tapped into her designer's intuition, designing the space to create a feeling of serenity. Her client, a financial-analyst-turned-spiritual-advisor, was looking to transform the condo into a private meditation getaway for both "daily enjoyment and to serve as a beautiful space for her home-based business," Wray explains.

After twenty years of moving between New York and the West Coast, traveling to study with Buddhist monks and learn from spiritual guides, the homeowner was permanently relocating to the Centennial State. She wanted to turn the vast penthouse suite she'd owned—and rented out to others—since 2003 into a modern home retreat for herself. That meant traditional Japandi influences and, most importantly, a private meditation room.

Seeking a fresh start in her old digs, the client told Wray that she wanted her apartment to evoke feelings of "tranquility, peacefulness, relaxation, and zen." To that end, she gave Wray's team creative leeway when it came to the renovation of the 3,500-square foot penthouse—while weighing in on planning the space and selecting environmentally friendly materials and responsibly sourced furnishings. By the time the renovation was finished, only the major plumbing and electrical intakes remained in their original locations—moving them could have caused structural damage to the home.

With help from Nehemiah General Contractors, Wray altered virtually everything else, transforming what was once a tired and dated "bad Picasso painting" of an apartment, filled with a mishmash of cherry and black decor, into a peaceful refuge with natural, eco-friendly materials like wood, stone, and terracotta, and soft, feminine shades of blues, peaches, and pinks. As befits a zen den with a meditation room at its core, "everything fell into place in a seamless, beautiful way," says Wray.

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Entryway

Wray wanted a simple yet functional entry into the home to reflect how her client lives. Bench: Four Hands. Mirror: Safavieh.



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Meditation Room

Pictured above.

What used to be an office space was transformed into the client's meditation sanctuary. Wray covered the sliding doors in a neutral, Japanese-inspired wallpaper with pops of blue throughout, so that guests are immediately met with beauty as they enter the space. "We wanted to provide a tranquil section with texture, so we added a floor-to-ceiling rock wall illuminated by LED channels," she explains, noting that this feature took a good chunk of the budget. She used an "authentic tatami mat configuration for yoga and meditation practice," to line the floors and added a carved wood table as a natural setting for serving tea. Like every pillow in the home, the floor cushions were custom-designed by Truss Interiors. Table: Phillips Collection. Wallcoverings on Sliding Doors: Kravet. Pendant: Arteriors. Pillows: Produced by Studio M.

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Living Room



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"[The client] wanted the living space to have cozy, comfortable seating that was lighter, brighter, and inviting," says Wray. Her team updated the tired fireplace with custom-colored Venetian plaster and removed the hearth for a more streamlined appearance. The custom kidney-shaped ottomans double as extra seating. Sectional: Norwalk. Pillows: Produced by Studio M. Ottomans: Kravet Custom.



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Texture and pattern-mixing played an important part in the living room. "The swivel chairs had high texture and a unique silhouette," says Wray. Swivel Chairs: Norwalk. Rug: Kravet.

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Kitchen



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While the location of the appliances had to stay the same because of the concrete floor and electrical wiring, Wray and her team removed everything else except for a structural column. "The original kitchen had dark cherry cabinets, and dark granite counters," Wray says. To create a bright, open cooking space they replaced all of that with Feldspato Diamante granite, which, Wray says, "is a natural material," and wood cabinets. Cabinets: Crystal Cabinets.



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The cabinet doors hide a world of storage and necessities: "Full pantry, two huge spice racks, two sets of trash, recycling and composting, as well as a hidden microwave and appliance garage," says Wray. Range: 36" Bluestar, Chef Grade. Hood: Custom-made.

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Dining Area



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In the dining area, the grasscloth wall-coverings "help define the dining space as its own within an open concept," says Wray. The client purchased the dining table in Italy. Inside the console, hidden freezer drawers offer more food storage. Wall Coverings: Phillip Jeffries. Pendant: Stathis, Etsy. Freezer Drawers: Sub-Zero.

Guest Bedroom



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The cloth mural behind the bed brings a refreshing touch of green to the secondary bedroom. Further Japandi influences come in the sleek, modern side tables and the quilted comforter. Mural: Designers Guild. Pendant: Arteriors. Pillows: Produced by Studio M.

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Primary Bedroom



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The owner's suite is a grand room, with a mix of patterns and textures, from the grasscloth covering the ceiling to the drapes lining the wall behind the bed. Bed: Hästens. Drapery: Blinds Couture Denver with Anna Elisabeth Fabrics. Casegoods: Made Goods. Grasscloth: Phillips Jefferies. Pillows: Produced by Studio M.

Bathroom



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A spa-like washroom features a stacked pebble wall and deep, bowl-shaped tub that bring in the colors and materials seen through the rest of the home. Tub: Native Trails.

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Using the similarly colored cabinets in the bathroom and kitchen helps gives the home a more intentional vibe. Light Fixtures: Mitzi.

Q&A

House Beautiful: What are a few ways you achieved your vision?

Julee Wray: It was time to get to work to get rid of the old and in with the new. We started with understanding the “feeling” the client wanted through her space.

HB: How did you save money/DIY/get crafty?

JW: We reused the roller shades in her spaces when "spending fatigue" came into play, but dressed them up with drapery and contemporary cornices.

HB: Any other memorable details?

JW: This project was driven by quality and the desire to get the details right. Our firm was allotted a large amount of trust and creative leeway to procure something truly special, and we are so grateful to have been able to do that with such freedom. We couldn't be more happy for this client to receive her personal, peaceful sanctuary with everything she wanted in the end.