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MODERN MAKEOVER IT'S A SLEEK, CHIC SLICE OF NEW ORLEANS HISTORY



TP ARCHIVE

By Karen Taylor Gist
InsideOv editor

The old Krauss Department Store that operated for almost 100 years on Canal Street was known in part for its women's foundation garments, those heavy-duty contraptions of thick elastic and metal hooks now gone the way of the dinosaur.

Elie Khoury's new home at that same site, now the 1201 Canal Street Condominiums that he developed, showcases foundations, too — the kind that tend to hold up long after their more modern counterparts have crumbled.

Walk into the 3,200-square-foot penthouse he shares with his wife, Daniela, and 14-month-old daughter, Elise, and the look is strikingly streamlined and modern, yet Khoury likes to talk about the things that aren't so visible: its old bones.

"It preserves the historic fabric," he said. "We can't do 18-foot ceilings today. What studs would we use? They don't build them like they used to."

His sixth-floor home, in a building behind the former Krauss that once served as its warehouse, "was the old equipment room with generators, fire pumps," Khoury said.

As a tip of the hat to its sturdy heritage, his entry hall displays two original steel structural columns. Painted to match the walls and looking almost like avant sculpture, these pieces of the past

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ABOVE: This 1953 photo shows the Krauss Department Store in its heyday.

LEFT: The guest bath features an eye-catching light fixture and tile that starts out light on the floor and gets darker as it runs up the back wall.

RIGHT: Elise Khoury, 14 months, stands in the kitchen, where custom-made wood laminate cabinets add warmth among the stainless steel appliances.

ON THE COVER: In a nod to the building's past, two structural steel columns remain in the Khourys' hallway.



ABOVE: The living area of Daniela and Elie Khoury's penthouse in the old Krauss warehouse building, now part of the 1201 Canal Condominiums, is simple yet elegant, modern yet comfortable.

LEFT: This ultra-modern curved chaise does double duty: Elise uses it as a slide, Daniela Khoury says.

RIGHT: A handmade table by E.J. Victor is a stunner in the master bedroom.





LEFT: Daniela and Elie Khoury, shown with daughter Elise, chose every piece in their home. "For two years, wherever we'd go, we'd buy things and put them in storage," Elie says. "We didn't know where it would go. We just liked it."

RIGHT: Friends relax on the Khourys' patio that overlooks downtown. "We loved this unit because of the patio," Daniela says. "We love to entertain."



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rest easily amid the Khourys' newly minted mix of modern art and furnishings.

"We've always lived in historic places. Our lakeshore summer home in Mandeville is the oldest one there," Elie said. "We were looking for a change; we wanted to do the exact opposite."

While the new look appears simple, achieving it took a lot of planning. For example, the color scheme that seems nearly uniform throughout the home is actually made up of about 10 shades of cool neutrals that sometimes vary in small increments.

The attention to detail is also evident in the art collection that adds most of the color in the home and in its fabulous furnishings.

As they were planning to move into the condo, "for two years, wherever we'd go we'd buy things and put them in storage," Elie said. "As we saw, we bought. We didn't know where it would go. We just liked it."

So much shopping, so little time?

"That's just normal for us. We love this stuff," he said. "It wasn't a chore for us."

"We picked every single piece," Daniela added.

Eventually, they used the plans from Matheo Brierre Architects and began positioning the new furnishings on paper. "We laid it all out on the floor plan: sconces, benches . . . all that. About 90 percent worked," when they actually moved in, Elie said.

Because business takes him about once a month to Miami, a mecca for modern furnishings, most of the couple's shopping was done there, at auctions and at the Design Center of America.

WAREHOUSE TO PENTHOUSE



In its earlier incarnation, the Khourys' 6th floor condo was the equipment room in the Krauss Department Store warehouse.

Source: Matheo Brierre Architects
EMMETT MAYER III / THE TIMES-PICAUNE

"Some of it (modern furniture) goes too far," he said. "We wanted comfort. Our place is lived-in."

Yet it's clutter-free. "People ask us where all our stuff is," Daniela said. "This is how we live."

Sleek and elegant

The European limestone floors anchor the sand-and-taupe color scheme. Commercial-looking doors are sleekly simple.

"There's no crown molding, nothing intricate," Elie said. "There's nothing that jumps in your face."

Light-toned European laminate kitchen cabinets keep to the cool hues, but still raise the temperature of the nickel pulls and stainless-steel appliances up to homey levels.

"We started with the cabinets; the cabinets were crucial," Elie said. "They're custom-made cabinets, so they don't look too small with the 18-foot ceilings."

Countertops of black honed

granite with straight, simple edges and the black seats on the chrome-framed bar stools punch up the contrast.

Earthy elements come in the form of an Art Deco wet bar made from gorgeous tigerwood and from a piece of prehistoric whale bone displayed as a sculpture, both found at Florida auctions. An ultra-modern curved chaise adds another touch of wood, but moves the look to the other end of the timeline.

The Khourys had their dining table made in Miami from a South American wood called macana. Clear Lucite chairs keep the unusual profile of the table visible and emphasize the modern feel.

Center stage

The living area at the heart of the house has windows on two sides, along with glass doors to the rooftop patio.

"All the windows are operable, so we can open them to get the breeze," Elie said.

Here, again, the feel is casually elegant. Taupe silk draperies are a shade lighter than the rear wall, trimmed in taupe that's a shade darker. Seating is comfortable, and wood tables and trim add warmth. Paintings add color, and there are sculptures on the walls, the table and the floor. Of the art, Elie said, "We don't do investments. If we like it, we buy it."

The gamut ranges from a 1900s Mardi Gras street-scene painting to a mixed-media textural work by California artist Erik Nelson to an unusual piece in the hallway by "an angry German artist who did something with some nails," Elie said.

But the view of the city — either through the windows or from the patio — offers some stiff visual competition to the art.

"We loved this unit because of the patio," Daniela said. "We entertain a lot."

She also loves the spa-like feel of the bedroom and bath.

"Everything is really thought through," she said. "The handles in the bathroom follow the curve of the wave (pattern) on the wall. So much love and thought and time were put in it."

The unusual platform bed includes a width of textured wood that surrounds the tailored silk duvet like a mat around a work of art, abutting a black headboard. "This one mixes traditional and modern," Elie said of the style.

A set of side tables, each a different shape, repeats the wood base and black-finished tops. A handmade table by E.J. Victor is a stunner in the sitting area.

A great divide

The Khourys' floor plan has one quirk, caused by the open-air light wells that were carved into

the building during its conversion from warehouse into living spaces. The walls of windows allow natural light to reach each residence: The old Krauss building holds 122 apartments; the former warehouse has 111 condos.

The Khoury penthouse is situated along one of the wells, so entering from the elevator, there's a very long, very wide hallway with windows on one side. It zigs into another, shorter, hallway, which is the entry point for the three bedrooms.

"The hallway is there, so we compensated by having interesting art in it," Daniela said.

A trio of related paintings by Michigan artist Rosemary Hornack evokes the sea in blues, oranges and purples. Local artist George Rodrigue's Blue Dog is painted sitting next to a woman who resembles, but isn't, Daniela.

Automated blinds can open, close or totally disappear behind the simple cornices at the top.

"I love to play with lights in this house. In the morning you see certain pieces of art and at night you don't see them at all," Daniela said.

Elie's office is at the end of the hall away from the living space, so he has the separation necessary to work at home.

"It's quiet, but he can rejoin family for breakfast," and other activities, Daniela said.

Elie also loves that they drive less now that they live downtown.

From the same location that made Krauss a shoppers' favorite, "We walk everywhere. We can literally go down and walk to some of the best restaurants in the country and entertainment at your fingertips. It's like instant party," he said.