



UPSHOT

One way or another, designer Kari Whitman converts a bland penthouse for a L.A. studio exec into a space with a cool-vibe



Printed on stainless steel,
the apartment's artistic
focal point is a larger-
than-life photograph of
Debbie Harry taken by
Jim Marshall.



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The classic Canapo by Cassina bright red rocking chair was designed by Franco Albini in 194

When Kari Whitman's client contacted her about decorating a newly purchased loft in downtown L.A., his design creed was simple: He wanted a place "that felt very now." The client, a studio executive, had snapped up a spacious but bland penthouse in the WaterMarke Tower. He wanted a home that would be ideal for entertaining and showcasing his passions, which include films and vinyl records.

"I always try to get to know my client's personalities, and he was very cool with a rock-and-roll vibe and a little eccentric," says Whitman, who has offices in L.A. and Boulder. "But the apartment didn't reflect this. Although it had amazing views, it was very boring."



Whitman suspended the client's Cervelo bike from chains under the staircase.

Whitman began by redoing the kitchen with simple white cabinets and Carrara marble counters, and opening it up to the living area. The concrete floor was replaced with maple flooring stained to a chocolate brown to warm up the space. To add to the openness, a wall shielding a staircase was removed and replaced with a stainless steel banister. Once the bones of the loft were fixed, Whitman began to layer in furniture to reflect her client's rock-and-roll taste.

How rock and roll did it get? Well, the apartment's artistic focal point is a larger-than-life photograph taken by Jim Marshall of Debbie Harry in a black bikini bottom with a studded leather belt. "My client had that photo in his old place, but it was two feet by three feet, extremely small," explains Whitman. "We blew it up to eleven by five and had it printed on stainless steel. It's huge."

With a giant Blondie staring down from the wall, the rest of the apartment's furnishings were tightly edited, but each one makes a statement. Whitman selected a carefully curated mix of vintage and



The dining table from Vladimir Kagan is offset with Charles Hollis Jones chairs. Whitman herself designed the lighting fixture, which consists of 96 light bulbs.

Industrial pieces for an eclectic look.

The main hang out space is visually uncluttered, with a faux leather sectional and a stainless steel coffee table. The vibe is cozy but practical. "He likes to sit on the floor with his vinyl and spin," says Whitman. Comfort was key, so the living area is anchored with a shag rug, which ended up being a source of negotiation. "My client wanted a fur rug that felt like the top of a bed on the floor, but I am an animal rights activist," shares Whitman. "We met in the middle with a faux rug."

The dining table from Vladimir Kagan, offset with Charles Hollis Jones chairs, is positioned directly in front of a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows to take in the views of downtown L.A. Whitman herself designed the lighting fixture, which consists of 96 light bulbs.

When asked to name his favorite piece in the apartment, the client chose a bright red rocking chair, the classic Canopo by Cassina that was designed by Franco Albini in 1945. "The shock of



A keen conservationist, Whitman was able to source the wood for the custom bookcase from a dead Aspen tree in a Colorado grove.

color makes it fun," tells the client. "It is my spot for reading scripts."

The rest of the loft's furniture was kept to a minimum. Whitman commissioned a faux leather sideboard with metal trim that looks like a stack of cubes. She also added a custom bookcase crafted from wood and metal. "There was no earth in there," she describes. "We needed the wood to anchor everything."

Although Whitman managed to deftly incorporate elements such as vinyl and Blondie in a space that featured 32-foot-high ceilings, the project's biggest design challenge came from an unlikely source – a bike. "He's really into biking, and I thought, 'How the heck am I going to find a place for his bike?'" She considered storing it against a wall and adding a black frame around it. In the end, she suspended it from chains under the staircase. It's a little arty, a little eccentric and very rock and roll, just like the apartment itself. ■