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Lofty



Ambitions

An innovative entrepreneur
creates the perfect Portland
pied-à-terre

REMARKABLE

by Candace Karu

Photography Darren Setlow

Brick walls. Soaring ceilings. Massive dividing doors. Kim Swan's fifth-floor apartment in Portland's Winslow Lofts wouldn't be out of place in New York's Meatpacking District or Tribeca. Her Congress Street abode has a sophisticated urban vibe that belies its Maine history. Exotic species of wood were used in the handcrafted casework. Lighting comes from sources as far-flung as Italy and Denmark. Even the dusky Pratt & Lambert paint colors reinforce the feeling of downtown chic. Swan, a Maine real estate entrepreneur, has created a retreat in the heart of the city, near work, restaurants, museums, and galleries, a place where she can ignore her car for days at a time.

When most of her fellow college students were spending their summers waiting tables or painting houses, Kim Swan was already a budding Bar Harbor real-estate mogul. By the end of her freshman year, she was a licensed broker at the Swan

Agency, which was founded by her parents in 1975. "I thought I would go into politics or law," she muses. "But business kept getting better and better." In addition to selling residential and commercial real estate, the Swan Agency Sotheby's International Realty, which she bought from her parents in 1994, specializes in the representation of inns and bed-and-breakfasts throughout the state.

Managing the three Swan offices and a staff of 25 would challenge the most efficient executive, but that is only the tip of Swan's impressive professional iceberg. Not content to limit her business dealings to real estate, Swan, a passionate art collector, also owns the Cygnet Gallery, which has locations in downtown Portland, Northeast Harbor, and Blue Hill. She and a partner, Nashville singer-songwriter Aaron Benward, own a music publishing business, Maineville Music, and recently Swan added inn proprietor to her resume. In 2006, she bought the

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historic Brunswick Inn on Park Row, and in 2007 she acquired the Pomegranate Inn on Portland's West End. Swan has plans to open a retail store this summer called "Pomegranate Style" inspired by the inn's luxurious yet quirky aesthetic.

Swan's primary residence is a contemporary house near the water in Bar Harbor. As she began spending more time in Portland, however, she realized that investing in a southern Maine pied-à-terre would save her time, energy, and money. An expansive circle of friends and business associates in and around Portland alerted Swan to new real-estate opportunities as they arose. One of the most intriguing was the Winslow Lofts project being developed by her long-time friend, Tom Moulton. The concept for these edgy urban condominiums so captured Swan's imagination that she committed to buy the fifth floor before the plans were completed.

Swan began to make changes immediately after closing. She started by combining a large one-bedroom apartment with the

adjacent studio, creating an expansive two-bedroom condo of proportions rarely found in a downtown setting. The master bedroom suite includes a sleeping and sitting area, an office, a sumptuous master bath, and a walk-in closet crafted out of ash and birch. There are terraces off both the kitchen and living room with city vistas from Bayside to the Congress Street arts corridor.

Like many of us, Swan has always kept a fantasy file filled with pictures torn from shelter magazines. Her favorite was a 2004 photograph of a sleek, edgy kitchen that was an artfully executed marriage of form and function. She knew its proportions and dramatic fittings would be perfect for the space. "I gave the picture to Brian Lazarus at Opus One, and his team made it happen," says Swan of the Portland-based woodworking company. The result is breathtaking: restaurant-quality appliances, cabinets handcrafted from African ebony, rich, poured concrete countertops, and sculptural light fixtures.

The master bath (opening page), with distant city views, is an oasis of tranquility. The Asian-inspired design carries through the simple cypress vanities topped by poured concrete slabs with integrated sinks. The open shower with a rainforest showerhead and smooth stone-tiled floor complete the feeling of spa-like serenity.

A Tim Gaydos seascape sits on a poured concrete mantle fabricated by StoneCraft Iconic Concrete in Gorham (opposite page, left). The stainless steel fire surround is by Rusted Puffin Metalworks in Portland, as are all the metal applications in the loft. The corner sculpture of a female torso is by Maine College of Art senior Katy Hughes.

The loft's second bedroom serves as a library with built-in bookcases on one wall flanked by daybeds piled with pillows (opposite page, right). "Kim asked us to build a cave, a place people can hang out when the party's winding down or where quieter conversations can continue in the middle of an animated gathering," says Jim Davis of Opus One. The walls were given many coats of Pratt & Lambert's Berry Bliss.

(right) "This really is my dream kitchen," says Swan. "The finishes, the appliances, and the space make it a perfect place to cook and entertain with room for everyone to gather comfortably, even if it's only for hors d'oeuvres. If I decide to go out to eat, I'm in the middle of some of the city's best restaurants. I love the Front Room, Dogfish, Norm's, and Walter's. After the gallery closes in the evenings, I'll meet friends for drinks at the White Heart or dinner at Emili ts a or Five Fifty-Five."



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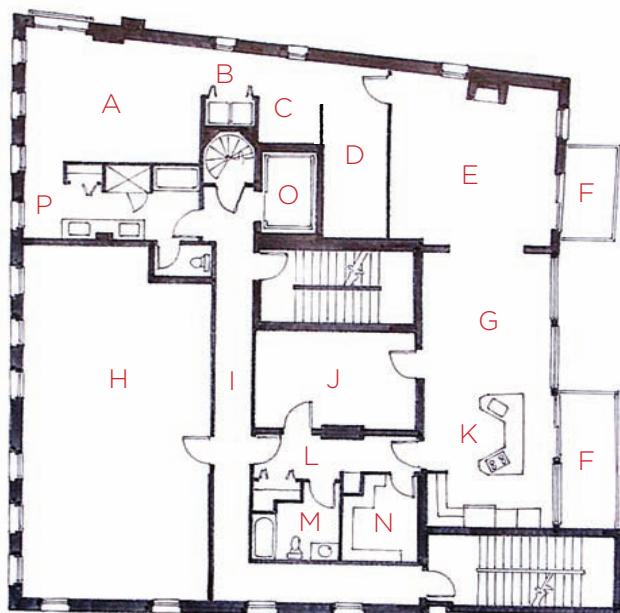


Swan's walk-in closet that would elicit a cry of delight from even the most jaded fashionista (above). Crafted out of ash and birch and fitted with open shelving and hanging space,

it looks more like a Madison Avenue store display than an apartment closet. "I love it," says Swan enthusiastically. "It's like my Bar Harbor closet on steroids."

The master bedroom is isolated from the activity of the main part of the loft, a genuine retreat. The most spectacular views, into the heart of Portland's Arts District, are from the bedroom and sitting area. Swan loves the loft's proximity to museums like the Portland Museum of Art and Maine College of Art's Institute for Contemporary Art, galleries, and studios. "I try to be here for First Friday Art Walk," she says. It's a great atmosphere in town and it keeps me current with the local arts scene."





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|---|----------------|---|-------------|
| A | Master Bedroom | I | Hall |
| B | Laundry | J | Bedroom |
| C | Office | K | Kitchen |
| D | Dressing Room | L | Foyer |
| E | Living Room | M | Guest Bath |
| F | Deck | N | Pantry |
| G | Dining | O | Elevator |
| H | Adjacent Unit | P | Master Bath |

"I love being in this kitchen, even though I don't cook very often," admits Swan. "Cooking for friends when they visit is a dream here, but when I'm alone, my refrigerator is usually stocked with little more than champagne and Diet Coke."

Lazarus and his colleagues, furniture designers Jim Davis and Gregory Martin, worked with Swan to create discreet areas within the loft. "Kim wanted the public areas—the kitchen and living room—to be more linear, almost masculine," says Lazarus. The bedroom and bathroom were designed to be more understated and feminine. The master bath, built into a relatively long, narrow space, feels serene and spa-like. "We used cypress for the bathroom cabinetry," says Martin. "It's often an outdoor application," he says. "Here we used it purely for aesthetics. It has a beautiful, golden tone that worked perfectly in the space."

Swan made all the decor decisions in the apartment herself. The furnishings are spare and angular, with bold splashes of color for emphasis. Much of the color is introduced by the artwork she has collected over the years. "I chose the upholstered pieces to be very inviting, but subtle in their design," says Swan. "I didn't want any of the furniture to compete with the art." From an aerial view of an island landscape by Eric Hopkins, which hangs over the master bed, to a brightly colored pastel from a trip to Paris, Swan's art punctuates the simplicity of the architectural detail.

With its warm colors and relaxed ambience, the loft is as comfortable when Swan is entertaining large groups as it is when she is just relaxing or watching television. "Many nights I get in late and pop a DVD in. The sound system here is theater quality, so I can get lost in the experience," she explains. "But there are times when I just want to fill the loft with friends. I've had as many as 80 people here and it didn't feel all that crowded."

Walking through the apartment, Swan stops at a window and gazes out onto Congress Street. "Look at all this," she says, gesturing enthusiastically. "It looks like an Edward Hopper painting." Outside the day is cold and melancholy. The milky afternoon light is fading, and the buildings are silhouetted against fast-moving gray clouds. Anonymous figures make their way along the sidewalk as the streetlights flicker on. Given the stark beauty of the cityscape below, it seems entirely possible that Hopper would have wanted to commit the scene to canvas. **MH+D**