



BEFORE



AFTER

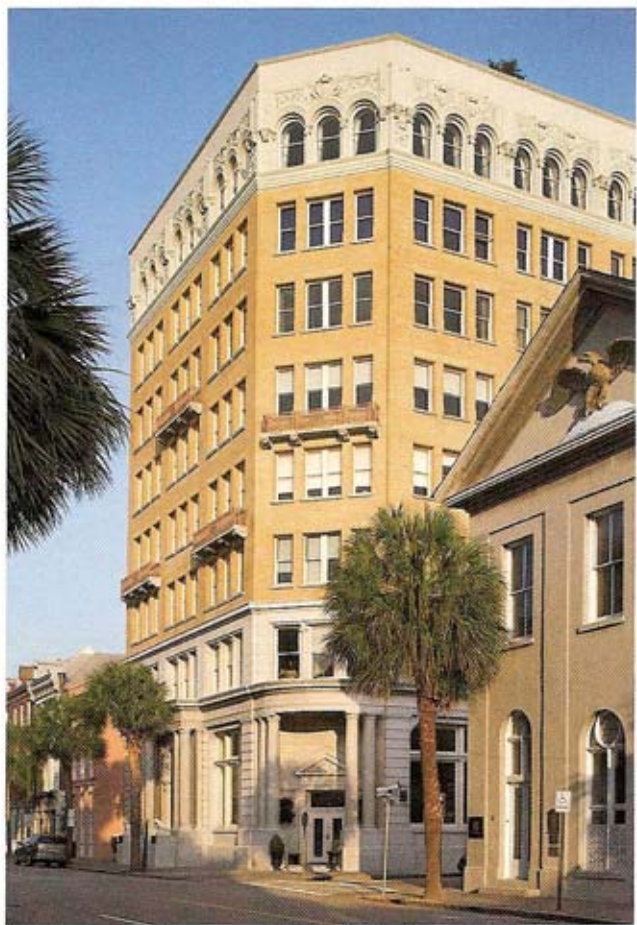
Dancing in Charleston

THE TOP FLOORS OF A ONETIME BANK BECOME A TRANQUIL AERIE

Architectural and Interior Design by Monique Gibson/Text by Susan Sheehan/After Photography by Jeff Herr



"My client, Terri Henning, needed a comfortable home where she could begin again," Monique Gibson (above, left, with Henning), says of the penthouse she created in the historic district of Charleston, South Carolina. **BELOW:** The apartment, located in the People's Building, designed by architect Victor Frohling in 1911, faces Broad Street.



OPPOSITE INSET AND ABOVE: The living room. "Terri was insistent that nothing, not even draperies, get in the way of the view," Gibson says. Jules Leleu pieces, including the games table and chairs, from Sotheby's, decorate the space. Bernd Goeckler torchère and bergères. Rogers & Goffigon drapery and green chair silk.

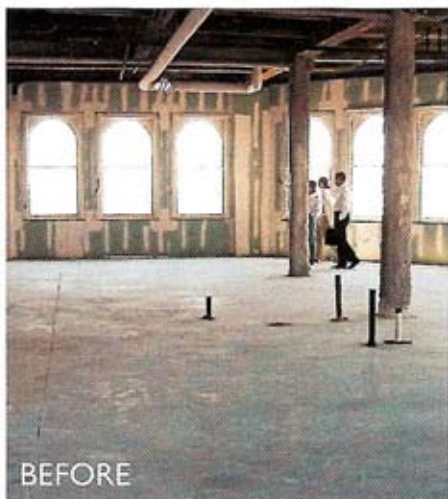
When the People's Building was finished in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1911, it was the city's tallest. Some regarded the eight-story structure as a sign of progress; others were afraid it would ruin Charleston's four-story skyline. "I don't believe that this lovely building ruined the skyline, but if it

did, the view was well worth it," President William Howard Taft pronounced from the rooftop at the opening celebration that April.

When the People's National Bank, the owner of the property, closed in 1936, the building changed hands and uses (by the late 20th century it contained a mixture of accounting, dental and law offices),

Two 1960s works by Otto Neumann hang in the living room. An Hervé Van der Straeten mirror, from Maison Gerard, is above the fireplace, near three Axel Salto vases, from Bernd Goeckler. Chesney's fireplace surround. Beauvais carpet.





and at century's end the upper stories became condos. In 1999 Terri Henning and her new husband took an option to buy the top floor as an investment. After Ed Henning was killed in a motorcycle accident in 2001, his widow sold their mansion, purchased the apartment with the well-worth-it view and engaged Monique Gibson to design it.

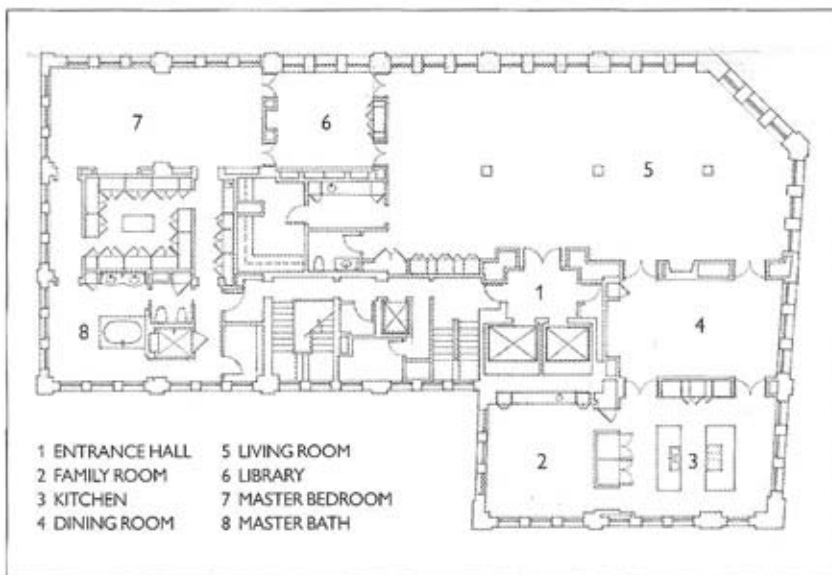
"The eighth floor had been gutted by the time I saw it," Gibson says. "It was all concrete floors and steel beams, but it had 73 arched windows. One of the first things Terri said to me was, 'I don't want to lose a single window.' We succeeded in keeping 72." Another of Henning's requests was a living room that would feel intimate if she were entertaining five people yet be large enough to hold 50 people. Henning also specified a tranquil palette. "I had enough dark and heavy in my heart," she says. "I wanted calm—sophisticated calm."

Henning collects cars: Her vintage autos include a 1957 Porsche 356A Speedster, a 1957 Devin SS and a 1954 Jaguar XK120 originally owned by Clark Gable—and she drives in vintage car rallies. "The first year I worked with Terri, she thought furniture was just pieces of wood," Gibson says with a laugh. "You can't make a collector of fine furniture out of someone who isn't a collector of something, but Terri was a connoisseur of cars, so I knew I could make her a connoisseur of good furniture. From her taste in sleek cars, it became apparent that the furniture that would suit her was French Art Déco."

The entrance hall is a tribute to Jean-Michel Frank. "You don't approach an apartment the way you do a house," Gibson says. "You can't have a driveway, so the getting-off-the-elevator experience is



ABOVE LEFT AND ABOVE: Gibson paneled the dining room to make it "darker and more intimate," she says. A mid-19th-century Italian chandelier is above the mahogany table. *The Banjo Man*, 1977, is by Charleston artist John Carroll Doyle. She chose a silk velvet, from Scalamandré, for the chairs. Beauvais carpet. BELOW: The first-floor plan. Gibson was responsible for the interior architecture.





a nice way of foreshadowing the story." The entrance was inspired by a room in the Institut Guerlain, designed by Frank in 1939, and was painted by a Charleston acquaintance of Henning's in trompe l'oeil style.

Henning chose to have her bedroom, sitting area and library face east: She likes to watch the sun rise from her bed. Most of the rooms in the 5,800-square-foot apartment, including the living room, which has eastern and southern exposures, offer spectacular views of sky and water. The old city is situated on a peninsula where

the Ashley and Cooper rivers flow into Charleston harbor.

The living room floor is limestone, the walls are white, the chairs and sofas are upholstered in ivory and cream silks and velvets, and the draperies are a soft green. "I thought that the blue sky and water should be complemented by the same shade of green that the blue is blue," Gibson says. The draperies are never closed. "No one can see in," Henning points out.

The don't-block-a-view approach also applies to the master bath and kitchen. In the master bath, an ample tub and a glassy

shower seem to float in the center of the room. In the kitchen, a three-part range faces a three-part sink. The surfaces of these kitchen islands are gray-and-white marble. "I didn't want the busyness of granite," Gibson says. "The veining of the marble is soft and flowing." Floor-to-ceiling white cabinets, which artfully conceal a refrigerator, a freezer, a microwave and storage space for china and glassware, have been placed on an interior wall. Henning wanted one room that was darker and more intimate than the others, so the dining room is paneled



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in mahogany. Its black, cream and gold Moderne carpet is a fanciful pattern of plumes and bows.

Gibson and Henning selected a number of elegant Jules Leleu pieces for the apartment—a sideboard for the dining room, two cabinets, a games table and chairs for the living room, a writing table and chair for the master bedroom—as well as additional pieces by Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann and Jacques Adnet. To help Henning visualize the placement of the furniture, Gibson spray-painted the layout on the concrete floors.

Since Henning also has a fleet of modern cars—a 1999 Ferrari, a 2005 Bentley GT and a 2006 Porsche, among others—Gibson decided that the classic apartment should also contain interesting pieces from the late 20th century and early 21st century. A mirror by Hervé Van der Straeten, a French jeweler and furniture designer, is above the living room mantel. A limited-edition desk in leather and bronze by Ingrid Donat, a protégé of Diego Giacometti’s, is behind a sofa. Photographs dating to the 1940s, by Horst P. Horst, decorate the master bedroom.

ABOVE LEFT: Brick walls ground the kitchen. “When I first saw the apartment, all the original brick was visible,” says Gibson. “We decided then that we must salvage as much of it as possible and use it in the kitchen and family room.” *Devant Chez Mestre*, 1959, is by Willy Ronis. Viking range and ovens. Barstools, Sentimento, with Bergamo fabric. **TOP AND ABOVE:** The family room. Karl Kemp Antiques side table.



AFTER



BEFORE

ABOVE AND LEFT: A 1940 photograph by Horst P. Horst is in an arched niche in the master bedroom, which echoes the arched windows throughout. Maison Gerard mirror, Jules Leleu writing table and chair, and lamps. Rogers & Goffigon drapery, sofa and club chair wool. Scalamandré sofa pillow and desk chair fabrics. OPPOSITE: The designer placed a mirrored vanity in the master bath.

BELOW: A wide range of architectural styles, including Georgian, Federal and Greek Revival, can be found in Charleston's historic district, which was established in 1931 and protects more than 4,800 structures built between 1712 and 1945.

During the four years Gibson worked on the apartment, Henning bought the top floor of the People's Building and the rooftop garden. A graceful staircase was designed to connect the eighth floor to the ninth, where there are two guest suites and a game room. Henning has given parties for as many as 120 friends in her new residence. Sixty-five guests attended a cocktail fund-raiser for Joseph P. Riley, Jr., Charleston's popular eight-term mayor. On another occasion she held a black-tie dinner for the Charleston Food + Wine Festival, which benefited several culinary institutions in Charleston. The guests were seated in the living room and dining room. Six chefs and their assistants finished and plated the six-course meal in the kitchen.

Large cased openings connect the kitchen to the family room, which has three windows facing north and three facing west. "I follow the day around the apartment," Henning says. "In the early evening I'm often in the family room, where I have my cocktail and toast the setting sun." □



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