

**INDUSTRIAL LIGHT** • In an urban loft, architect Paul MacNeely uses a metal framework to strike a luminous balance



**F**ROM THE SUBTLE WOOD-PATTERNED tile floors all the way up to the aluminum and steel ceiling, the kitchen's crisp and modern lines are apparent. However, with all that hardware, the owners, a couple who had run a scrap-metal business that had been in the family for three generations, did not want their kitchen to feel heavy or stifling. "We wanted to use materials that were organic but also had an industrial feel," says the wife.

Working off raw space in an old industrial building

ARCHITECTURE: ECK/MACNEELY ARCHITECTS INC.

in Boston's South End, architect Paul MacNeely, a partner at Eck/MacNeely Architects Inc. of Boston, transformed the penthouse unit into a contemporary, urbane retreat for his clients. He considered the space as a whole, and with ceilings that soared two stories high, it offered an opportunity to create a loft within the loft that would both offer added square footage and define the kitchen. The problem, he says, was to find a way to make the second floor look and feel integrated into the overall design.

A lantern inspired the solution, says MacNeely, who decided to use the "architecture as a light fixture."

**THE ELONGATED LINES** of the kitchen make it seem larger than its 315 square feet. The custom maple cabinetry by Caliper Woodworking in Malden, Massachusetts, works with the darker tones of the fumed-walnut island to create contrast.

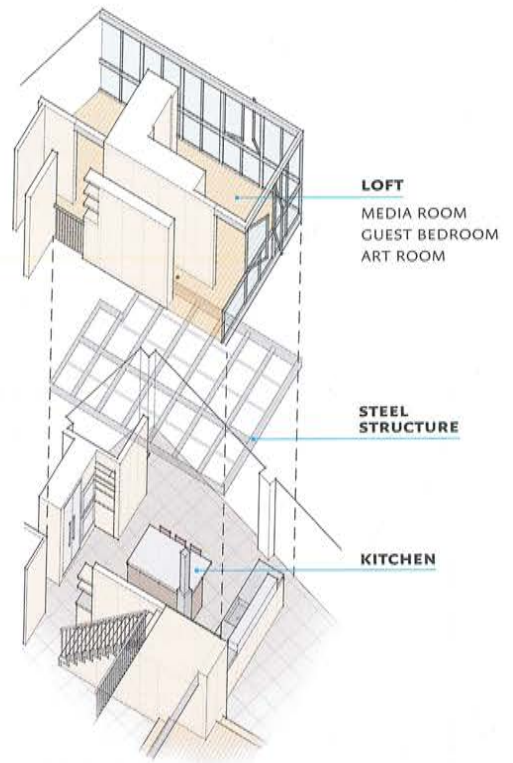
The kitchen and loft were conceived as one big unit. On the lower level, crisscrossing steel beams in a square pattern form the kitchen ceiling, which is inset with perforated aluminum panels. Embedded in the panels are dimmable fluorescent bulbs that send light gleaming through the custom mesh design. "One night, I was walking by and I looked up at the building and could see the glow of the ceiling," says MacNeely, noting that from the street, the condominium did, in fact, resemble a huge lantern.

During the day, "the space is flooded with natural light. It's a gift of the unit," says MacNeely, pointing to the floor-to-ceiling windows that also provide sweeping views of the city. The couple wanted an indoor/outdoor effect, so the expansive windows were left curtainless, though there are electronically controlled shades that can be raised and lowered as needed.

Sunlight washes over the kitchen island, the centerpiece of the room. Made of a richly



**STEEL GRID CONSTRUCTION** separates the kitchen from the media room on the upper level (ABOVE AND ILLUSTRATION, RIGHT). Open shelves keep dinner and stemware within easy reach. The stainless steel backsplash on the peninsula to the left edits the view from the dining area.



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colored fumed walnut — “a nice, warm contrast” to the maple used throughout the rest of the kitchen, says the wife — the island is used for both food preparation and eating. The finishing touch is a marble countertop that is “so beautiful, you just want to touch it,” says MacNeely. It is a stunning foil to the concrete countertops elsewhere in the kitchen.

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At the far end of the room, a windowless wall sheathed in maple holds ovens and a glass-front refrigerator. Behind it is the pantry. A work of art in itself, the trapezoidal space has enough room to house a microwave and an array of small appliances as well as typical pantry items. The same wall, on the other end, also hides an office nook ideal for the husband, who wanted an area that was private but “very much connected to what’s happening in the kitchen.”

A peninsula divides the kitchen from the dining area. “We do a lot of cooking, and when friends and family visit, I don’t like to

**THE INTERIOR LOFT space is framed by windows, which keeps the condominium from feeling closed in. Playful accents of bright color counter the darkness of the industrial steel structure.**





**DROP-SHAPED GLASS pendant lights (LEFT) that hang above the counter separating the kitchen and dining area add to the industrial sensibilities of the design.**

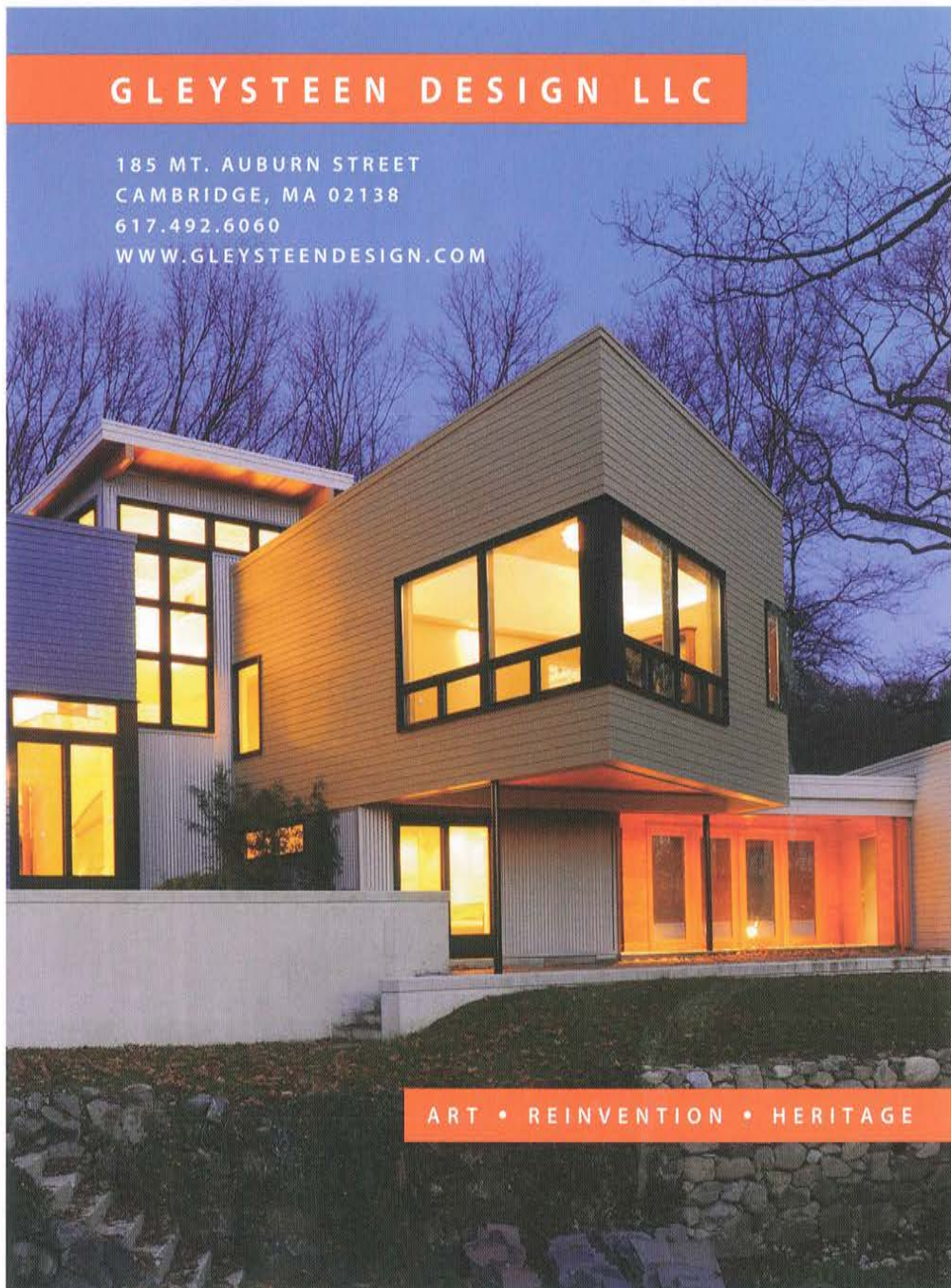
**Dimmable fluorescent bulbs shine through the custom mesh ceiling (ABOVE) while a long, narrow fixture provides task lighting above the island.**

be held captive in the kitchen," says the wife. The peninsula counter, to which MacNeely added stainless steel cladding, is tall enough to edit the view. "I like to have everything that I'm using available and visible," the wife says. "We have the open concept, so I wanted the counter to be high enough so when you're sitting at the dining room table, you can't see the mess in the kitchen."

It is that contrast between open and hidden spaces, the layering of materials, and the optimization of light that illustrate what MacNeely finds so enjoyable about the kitchen. "There's a sense of discovering the space," he says. ■

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