

HOME RULE

Empty Nest

Finding Common Ground

Empty-nesters Scott and Annie Williams negotiate a fresh start and a new lifestyle with a contemporary home in the city.

By Catherine Funkhouser

Photographs by Gordon Beall

“ADAPTATION IS BASIC TO SURVIVAL.” That’s Annie Williams’ mantra—one that’s helped her move and reestablish a home several times (in several different states) with her husband, Scott, during their 42-year marriage. The biggest change, she says, came recently when the empty-nest couple sold their period abode and chintz-clad furnishings in Charleston, South Carolina, and relocated to The District for a fresh start.

They found a contemporary condo within the luxurious new development 22 West Residences that met their many needs. Its convenient location within walking distance of Dupont Circle and Georgetown offered close proximity to shops and restaurants; spectacular urban views coupled with great amenities like a workout room and rooftop pool made staying in quite appealing as well.

But while Scott loved the floor-to-ceiling glass walls, the ultramodern feel left Annie a bit cold. “I like stuff, but Scott wanted a cleaner look,” she explains. Parting with an extensive collection of antique books, silver, porcelain and 18th-century furniture hadn’t been easy, but with her mantra in mind, she was determined to find a home décor style they both could embrace. Annie hired designer









James Beebe Hawes, principal of Caldwell-Beebe Interiors in McLean, Virginia, to help her marry the couple's opposing aesthetic preferences.

To create the sophisticated, pale-on-pale spaces, Hawes drew on the Japanese concept of *shibui*, which refers to an understated beauty aesthetic. "It's about simple, subtle design that never tries to clobber you over the head with its importance," says Hawes. "We mixed it up. You can take very modern elements and mix them with very traditional elements as long as there is a link. You don't want to have too much of one thing."

Hawes acquired several pieces from Saladino Furniture—among them the sofa and the coffee, side and dining tables—that fit perfectly with the "classic with a little crust" feel he was after. A painted 19th-century marriage armoire opens to reveal a 42-inch flat-screen TV (and, upon closer inspection, the original owners' initials and 1828 wedding date). Abstract encaustic artwork by local talent David Bell hangs at the armoire's side.

The condo's contemporary architecture is both its greatest asset and most confounding challenge. The space converges at a triangular point,

which serves as the Williams' dining area. "There are no walls, no center," says Hawes. "It's a floating space." Undeterred, Hawes created a flexible area for eating and entertaining. A table with a custom-size balustrade base and glass top serves as the anchor. The form is timeless and classic, but the materials—lacquer and sandblasted glass—update the piece and give it panache. The base and skirted chairs are on wheels, allowing for an effortless transition from breakfast for two to dinner for six. For larger parties, a caterer's top can replace the glass one.

"This home lives so easy," says Annie. "I'm so happy now that I never want to leave. I'm not a homebody type, but Scott has to ask me to please go out." However, the couple do take advantage of their city setting, and Annie encourages other over-60 couples to embrace change: "Being empty-nesters offers a new beginning. Be open to exploring new avenues and trying new things. It should be fun." *Caldwell-Beebe Interiors, 1219 Stuart Robeson Dr., McLean, VA, 703-790-1183; caldwell-beebe.com. 22 West Residences, 1177 22nd St. NW, 202-333-3313; 22west-dc.com*

