

MY SPACE

A STUDY IN COMFORT,
NO CLUTTER IN SIGHT

By Suzanne C. Ryan
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Dennis Duffy's workdays are intense. He's the principal of a bustling interior design firm, Duffy Design Group, whose clients include Manny Ramirez, Rocca Kitchen & Bar, and the downtown hotel the Harborside Inn. He's also engrossed in launching his own furniture line and retail store, D Scale, in the South End next month.

Many nights, the designer doesn't arrive at his condo at the InterContinental Boston until after 8 p.m. His sanctuary — the home office — awaits. "It's really comfortable for me," Duffy said. "It's familiar, a place where I feel like my friends are around me."

Visitors expecting to see a roomful of samples from Duffy's new furniture line will be disappointed. The designer's study, a brightly lit room that overlooks the fire station on Atlantic Avenue, is filled with a mix of vintage pieces and a few contemporary items, but nothing from the store.

"People should have things around them that mean something to them," he said. "For me, it's more about the context of the pieces and the relationship of the pieces to each other. There's something nice about a piece that has a little history to it."

Family and friends are a dominant theme in Duffy's study, with one wall covered with framed photographs of his grandparents, his parents, his sister, and some good friends. Another table houses about 20 additional framed photos of friends.

Surely one of the most noteworthy pieces in the room is the cat's giant scratching post with multiple platforms. It's 6-feet-6-inches tall — taller than Duffy — and is covered in beige carpeting. Lucy and Rex, Duffy's pet Abyssinian cats, call it home. "Lucy likes to sit at the top and look out on the street," said Duffy.

In front of the post sits Duffy's beloved brown leather reading chair, a modified wingback. "It was my grandfather's library chair," he said. "I used to read in it all the time as a kid. I was born in Maryland but we lived in dif-



On the desk in the designer's brightly lit home study is a pyramid and ball made of Nero Marquina marble.

ferent parts of Florida over the years. The chair always came."

Next to the chair is a small cast glass table by Jack Lenor Larson. Two porcelain dolphins sit atop it.

Duffy's channel-quilted leather sofa is vintage, a piece he was given 20 years ago. "On one of my first projects, there were two sofas in a living room," he said. "My client let me have them."

When Duffy moved into the condo at the InterContinental eight months ago, he designed a simple rift oak bookcase with a dark espresso stain. The case is filled with cookbooks, books on photography and spirituality, as well as novels (the entire "Harry Potter" and "The Chronicles of Narnia" series). "It's constantly being edited," he said. "I don't want my books to overtake me."

Duffy is a stickler about clutter. In his study, there isn't one loose paper in sight. "I can't work in chaos," he said. "I have an undergraduate degree in chemistry [University of Miami]. I'm very logic based and orderly."

He's also very attuned to the arts. Thus, the large oil painting on the wall by his friend, Boston artist Christos Hamawi. The scene, called *Eternal Meadow*, depicts a bright blue sky and brown field.

Near the desk is a photo of two glass doors — the kind you might find at a movie theater — with the word "pull" on them. The doors are chained shut. "I got it in New York from a street vendor. I love that symbolism. It's the possible," Duffy said.

The 50-year-old designer, who lives with just his cats, has a flat screen TV on the study wall and an entertainment center. Adjacent to it is a CD holder with more than 150 discs. Duffy can live without the TV, he said, but not music. "I had speakers put in every room," he said. "I love lounge music, opera, even country and western."

Duffy said he's never lived in a luxury building before and it has required some adjustments. "I used to feel guilty about having [the concierge] help with the groceries," he admitted.

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PHOTOS BY JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

In his study (above), interior designer Dennis Duffy surrounds himself with items that bring to mind family and friends: his grandfather's library chair, a giant scratching post for his two cats, a cast glass table with two porcelain dolphins, and photos galore (right).

