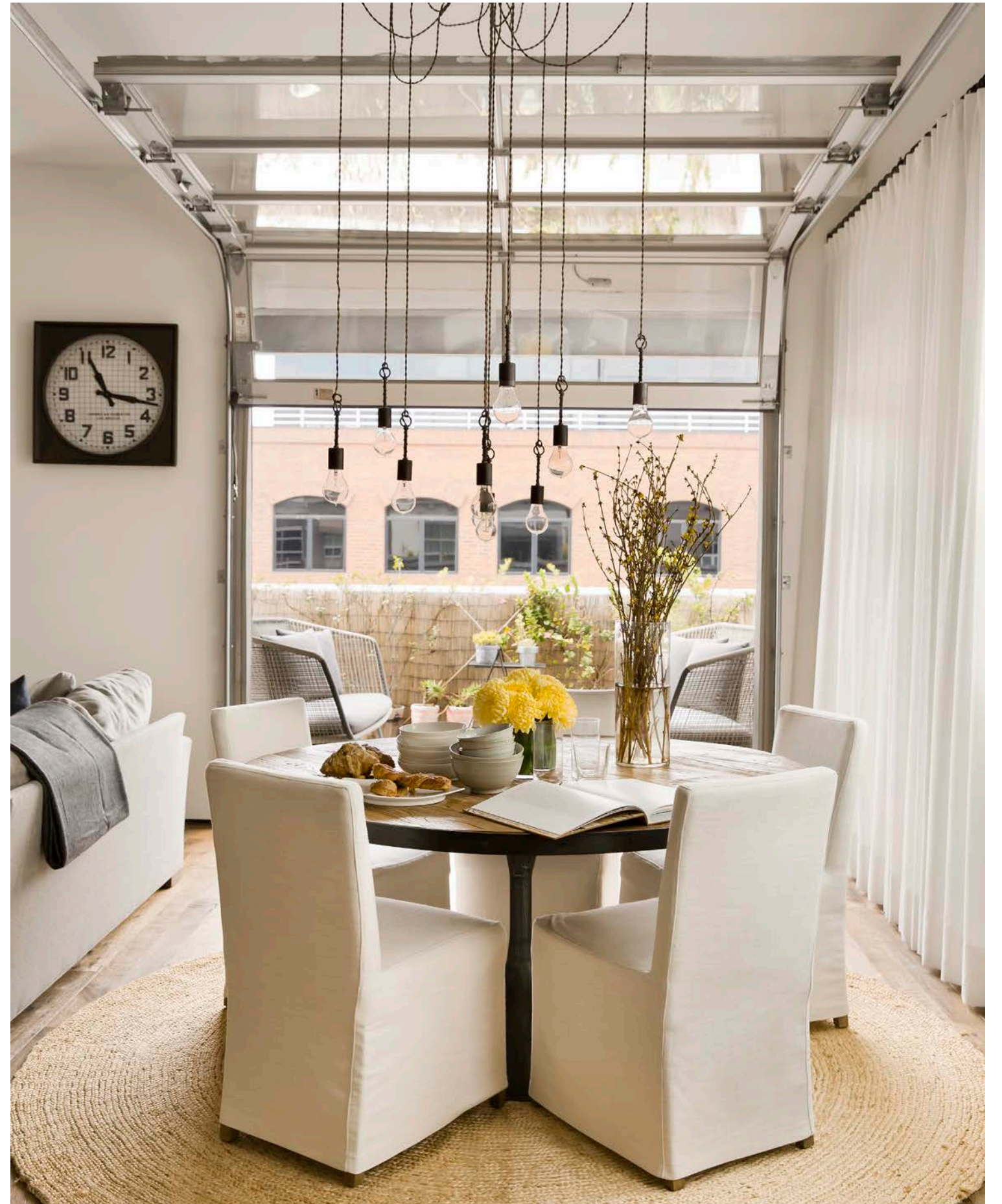




The Masculine Loft

ARCHITECT MAY SUNG CREATES A HOME WITH RICH, NATURAL DETAILS

TEXT BY DEGEN PENER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY MANOLO LANGIS





The living room area includes a Room & Board sofa, Restoration Hardware dining table and chairs and a chandelier by Hilary Nagler of Flea Market Rx. A glass-door rolls up to give access to the terrace.

IT WAS WHITE ALL OVER. Even the floors were a sleek white, made glossy with an epoxy finish. “When I walked in, I was like, ‘Oh my god, what do you do with this big blank space?’” says architect May Sung, co-founder of SUBU Design Architecture of her client’s large one-bedroom loft in Santa Monica. Much longer than it is wide, the 1,750-square-foot condo — previously an office — felt like a “long bowling alley,” Sung recalls, with the expanses of white giving the eye nowhere to rest.

So Sung set about breaking up the space into zones for the owner, a thirtysomething banker and surfer who moved to Southern California from the East Coast six years ago. Most prominently, she designed an immense island for the kitchen, which sits at the center of the entire unit. Sixteen feet long, the island is itself divided into areas: one for eating, one for drinking, one for reading. “I love playing with proportions. This gave me the perfect opportunity. We wanted to create an anchor that would act as a stage for living. It sets the stage for everyday life,” says Sung.

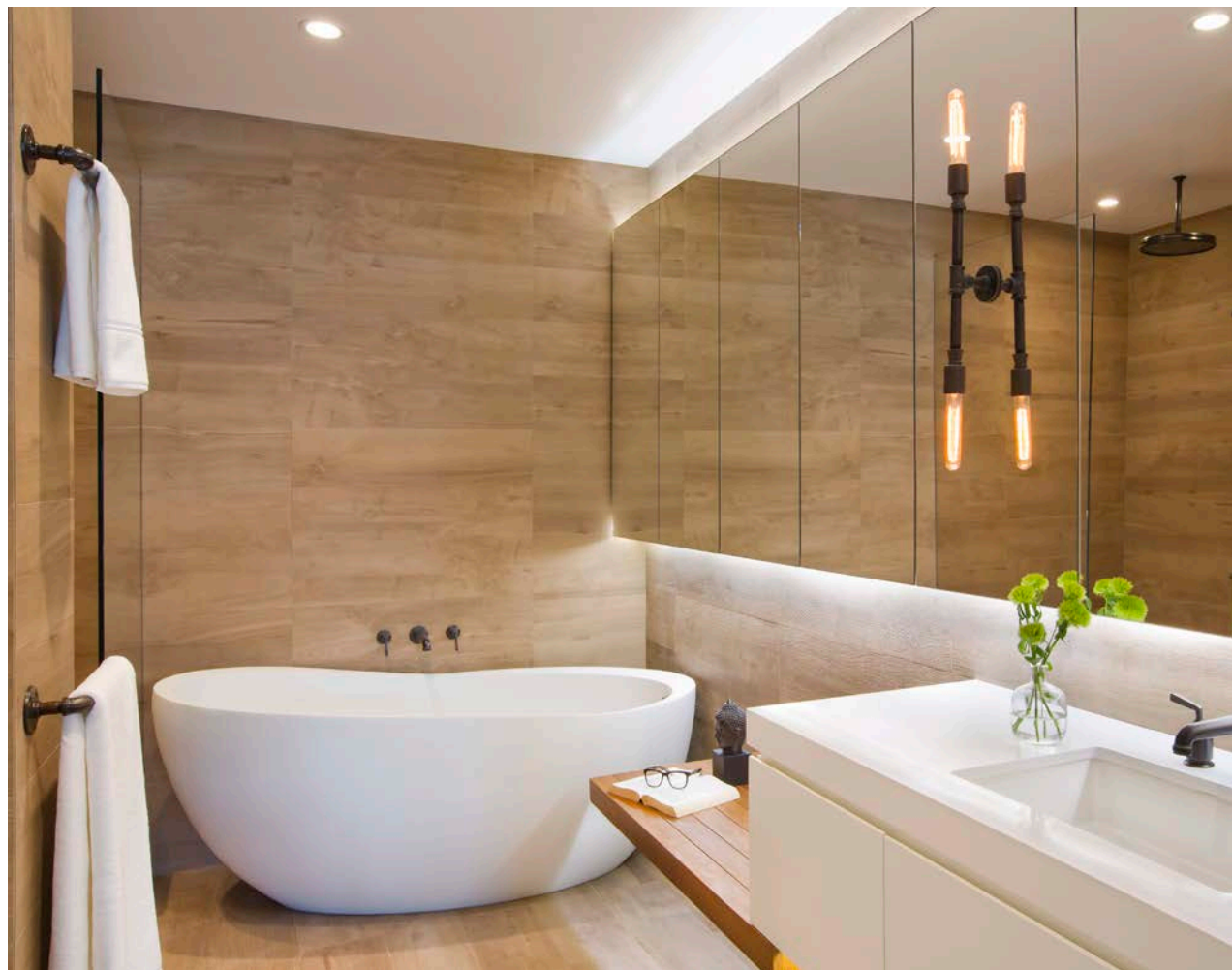
The island is composed of galvanized plumbing pipes and pipe connections (“Literally from the plumbing store,” she says) and large 4x12 salvaged beams bolted together. They are heavily weathered and, in one spot, the aging process has left a splintered hole that goes all the way through the board. “I said, ‘Are you sure you don’t want to fill it especially since it’s in the kitchen?’” Sung recalls asking her client. He said he liked it as it was. “It’s great to work with someone like that. Someone who really gets it.” Sung chose large Thomas O’Brien lighting fixtures to hang over the island. “The pendants cannot be wimpy.” And she installed open shelving in the kitchen area. “It allows the space to open up and shows off the backsplash material. Also, open shelving forces one to be neat—it’s a great trick to avoid clutter.

Adding texture like this was the first thing the owner told Sung that he wanted. A native of Minnesota, he loves the outdoors and was looking for a home with rich, natural details. One of his own pieces of furniture, a timeworn wine-bottle holder, set the template for the year-long project. “I spied it leaning against a wall and asked if this was the sort of texture he was imagining,” says Sung.

Throughout the apartment now there are surfaces that are artfully chipped, nicked, aged, gouged and scratched. “We wanted to create depth and history,” she says. Sung installed hand-distressed oak floors; had a slab of sandstone hand-carved into a sink for the guest bathroom; clad walls and cabinets in reclaimed wood; and put in towel rods and other fixtures in the master bath made from vintage bathroom piping. An obsessive researcher online for new sources, she was thrilled when she



ABOVE / OPPOSITE The kitchen's custom island is made of reclaimed wood and galvanized plumbing pipes. Other details include a Walker Zanger countertop and backsplash, Thomas O'Brien pendant lights, Restoration Hardware bar stools, DuChateau wood flooring, GE oven and hood, Waterworks faucets and cabinets with Rocky Mountain hardware. **RIGHT** The master bath features a Waterworks tub, Ann Sacks porcelain wood pattern tile, towel rods and light fixtures by Hilary Nagler of Flea Market Rx and a sink from Kohler.





The immense custom bed is made from reclaimed railroad ties. Night tables are made from blackened bent steel plates, table lamps are by Damien Weaver from DWV Vintage Lamps, the painting is by artist Lana Yumi Chun. The bedroom also features ConcreteWall wallpaper and LED lighting. The guest bath features a hand-carved sandstone sink, a vintage Italian gas lamp from Obsolete, a vintage mirror from Mortise & Tenon and faucets by Waterworks.



The earthy tone of the materials brings calmness," she says. "It's an oasis that is masculine."

—ARCHITECT MAY SUNG



found a wallpaper that looks like unfinished concrete, which she used on one wall of the bedroom. "Most people can't even tell that it's not," she says. Sung surprised her stone subcontractor by asking him to chisel the edges of the Walker Zanger limestone countertop in the kitchen. "He was like, 'What?' I wanted him to rough it up a little bit. The edges are purposefully uneven and worked through, giving the kitchen counter a masculine medieval surface," says Sung.

In the bedroom, Sung created an enormous custom platform bed that's just as statement-making as the kitchen's island. (Both were fabricated by general contractor Tommy Von Lokeren.) Built out of reclaimed railroad ties, it measures 12 x 12 feet, sprawling more than three times the area of a standard king size mattress. "she says. "The client is athletic and outdoorsy. He also has a high stress job. The earthy tone of the materials is chosen to bring calmness. It's an oasis that is masculine."

Even with all the rustic wood design details, however, the loft still feels like it belongs in its urban environment, thanks to the clean lines and bold block shapes of the furnishings. "Our vision was to create a luxurious industrial space to complement the existing open palette. One of the challenges was to capture the client's love of natural materials, without looking like a lumberjack's cabin," says Sung. "The texture create depth and history. We also looked for fixtures that the has an early 20th Century industrial vibe. All of the material had to be genuine and true to the vision, while respecting the industrial nature of the space." ❧

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