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Condo library provides a study in style and substance

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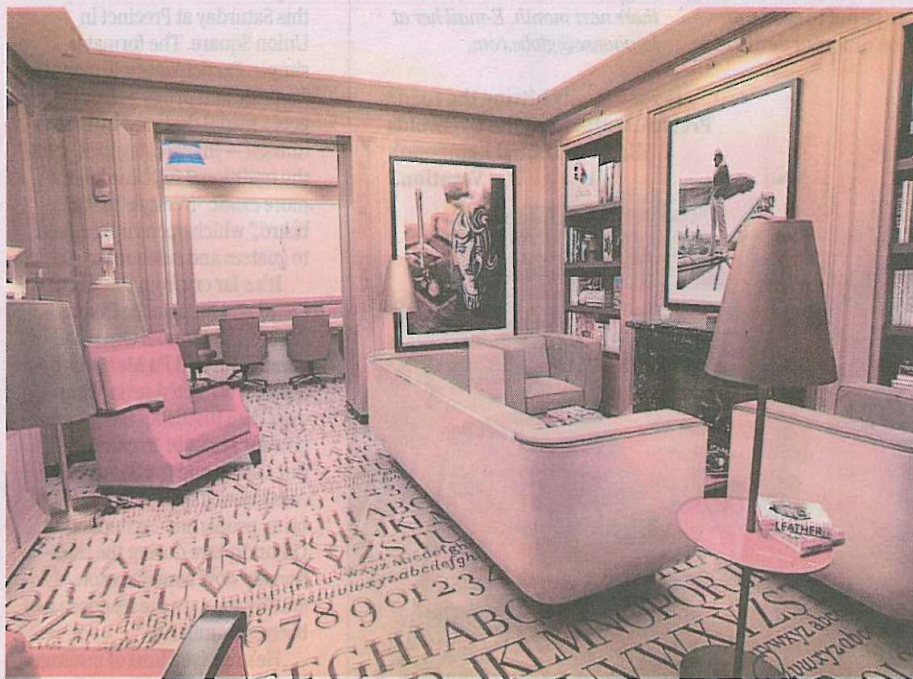
Prospert Assouline is writing a new chapter. The cofounder and creative director of the Paris-based luxury publishing house Assouline, he has turned his attention to residential interiors, recently launching the Assouline Culture Lounge, a high-end, private library space that recently opened at The Clarendon in the Back Bay.

The Moroccan native had previously partnered with development team Related Companies to open two culture lounges, one in New York and one in Los Angeles. He



PROSPER ASSOULINE

saw the Hub as the next logical locale. "Boston is very strong and very alive and energetic," said Assouline, 53. As for The Clarendon, designed by architect



JOANNE RATHE/GLOBE STAFF

Assouline Culture Lounge is a high-end, private library space at The Clarendon in the Back Bay.

Robert A.M. Stern: "I was in love with the design of the building, because it really is a luxury in this area."

The 320-square-foot lounge,

which formally debuted last month, offers a cozy yet lavish common area in which condo residents can read, recline, or rub shoulders. Flaky white oak

wall paneling complements the beige, Art Deco-inspired couch and club chairs. Ostrich eggs share shelf space with hundreds of glossy Assouline titles on

travel, fine art, architecture, and style. A gas fireplace adds warmth, while a black and white portrait of Gary Cooper, located above the black marble mantel, bestows a whiff of cool.

In conceiving the space, Assouline — who was once a magazine artistic director — sought to go well beyond the no-frills aesthetic of a municipal reading room.

"A library is not always shelves and books and something boring," said Assouline, who splits his time between New York and Paris. "The idea is to create something fantastic, a small area . . . where you want to spend not 10 minutes, [but] 45 minutes." Assouline sourced every item in the room himself, from the hand-stitched alphabet rug to the Roy Lichtenstein print, going so far as to design the couch and chairs himself. He even created a special scented candle for the room with the assistance of a chemist in Paris.

Said Assouline: "Each of these places could be one of my libraries in one of my apartments."