

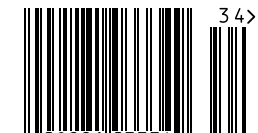
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COMFORT ZONE

DESIRING A COZY SPACE TO CALL THEIR OWN, A PAIR OF DESIGN-SAVVY INHABITANTS REVITALIZE A CHICAGO APARTMENT USING CLASSIC ANTIQUES AND MODERN ARTWORK.

WRITTEN BY **KIMBERLY OLSON** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **NATHAN KIRKMAN**

INTERIOR DESIGN Tom Konopiots and Michael Stornello, Vincere Ltd.
BEDROOMS 2 | BATHROOMS 3 | SQUARE FEET 2,700



On a leafy street in Chicago, Tom Konopiots and Michael Stornello found a beautiful Venetian Gothic co-op apartment that simply called out to them. The building, constructed in 1923, was designed by noted architect Robert S. DeGolyer, whose imagination gave form to many of the elegant buildings found along Lake Shore Drive and the surrounding streets. As much as the couple loved the exterior, they were equally charmed by the interior's old-world formality. "The unit had great presence, with a wonderful 7-by-27-foot groin-vaulted foyer," Konopiots says.

While the apartment was in near-estate condition, there were traces of updates done through the years, such as hand-painted vines and trellises on the dining room walls. Konopiots and Stornello, who are designers themselves, intended to rejuvenate the home to suit their taste. "There was a lot to work with," Konopiots says. "The bones of the apartment

Soft hues in the living room provide an ideal backdrop for designers and homeowners Tom Konopiots and Michael Stornello's collection of art, antiques and personal treasures. Two 19th-century Louis XVI-style chairs from Habité were reupholstered in a striped linen from Clarence House.



The foyer affords a glimpse of the living room, including a custom armchair upholstered in a Rose Tarlow Melrose House fabric. The wooden Shanxi table by Formations was purchased at Holly Hunt, while the Dauphine floor lamp from Circa Lighting provides illumination.



A custom sofa, fabricated by Eurocraft and covered in Great Plains cotton linen by Holly Hunt, fulfills the homeowners' dual requirements of style and comfort. The abstract oil painting by Chris DiVincente and the 1970s églomisé-and-bronze coffee table from Habité ground the vignette.



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and the layout were great, so we started with that as a springboard.” The couple—and their 6-year-old Labrador retriever—also needed the home to work with their lifestyle: It had to be stylish without sacrificing comfort. “We love to entertain,” Stornello says, “and do so informally most of the time, but we have formal sit-down dinners as well.”

To start, the pair made some minor modifications to the layout so that it would better meet their needs. They expanded both the master bathroom and the master closet, for example, by borrowing space from adjoining areas of the apartment. They then set about designing each room; the living room proving to be the trickiest. “It’s a long room and has two means of ingress and egress, as well as a fireplace—and we wanted to incorporate the piano,” Konopiots says. “Making that work seamlessly was a challenge, but it was a lot of fun to figure out. We had to commit to not making the fireplace the only focal point, and once we did that, the room just fell into place.”

The master bedroom was designed to be tranquil with compelling art and accents to lend a graphic jolt. A table lamp with a base purchased at 507 Antiques rests atop a custom mirrored bedside table by John Himmel Decorative Arts. The chair from Ebanista lends a textural element.



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The two initially were curious about the living room's painted beams and corbels. "We stripped them down, thinking that they would be beautiful limestone," Stornello says. "But they turned out to be 1920s pressed concrete." Being resourceful designers, they turned that minor setback into an asset by creating a striking era-appropriate coffered ceiling, incorporating the original beams into it.

Throughout the home, the designers used a subtle color palette to create a sense of harmony and then added spots of different shades in various rooms for visual interest. For a natural collected look, they fashioned the spaces with a variety of antiques, modern art and comfortable furnishings. "We mixed a lot of periods, styles and textures," Stornello says. "The Lucite tables in the foyer are very contemporary,

In the dining room, an updated damask wallcovering by Jane Churchill through Cowtan & Tout provides a soft backdrop for the custom wenge china cabinet with bronze inlay by Christian Liaigre. The elephant artwork, a mixed media on paper, is by Michel Nedjar.



Old and new are juxtaposed in the dining room. A walnut Christian Liaigre table is partnered with scrubbed-pine chairs from Lucca Antiques featuring seats in a silk lampas fabric by Tassinari & Chatel purchased at Stark through Lelievre. The chandelier is from New Metal Crafts.



The elegant foyer, featuring an original groin-vault ceiling with brackets, was one of the elements that enchanted the designers when they first viewed the property. A custom wool-and-silk runner from Atelier Lapchi contrasts with the rich oak floors. Antique sconces provide old-world sophistication.



Above: In the inviting library, 1930s Art Deco chairs by Jean-Maurice Rothschild are covered in wool mohair. The bold custom rug and modern artwork—such as Ed Paschke's *Bobo Green*—give the cozy room an edge. Left: A Lucite demilune table by John Barman adds unexpected modernity to the foyer.



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and we love to juxtapose elements when it feels right. Above all else, everything needs to be inviting.” That requirement applied even to the antiques they used. “In the library, there’s a pair of Rothschild chairs from the 1930s,” Konopiots says. “They’re smaller in scale but are the most incredibly comfortable chairs.”

Whether designing for a client or themselves, Konopiots and Stornello also take advantage of the wealth of beautiful fabrics on the market. “Fabric really is the icing on the cake,” Konopiots says. “It makes a room—whether it’s for pillows or curtains or upholstery.” With everything now in its place, the couple say the apartment looks—and functions—just the way they envisioned. As Stornello says, “People feel very welcome and comfortable here. They’re not afraid to sit anywhere, and that was a driving factor in the design.” **L**