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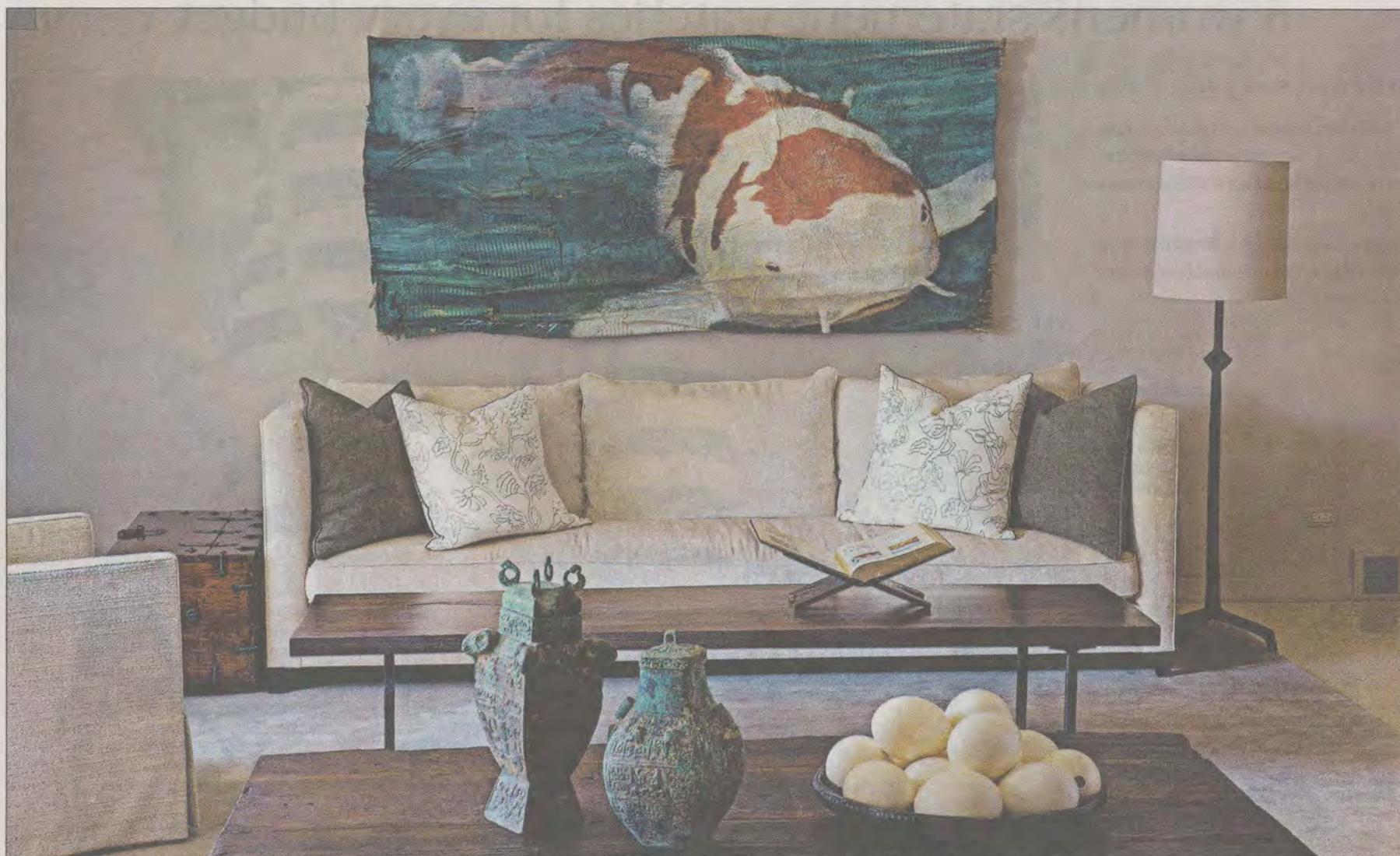
Gardening pros share
pet peeves and
common mistakes GARDEN PAGE

Balancing Act

Five bits of wisdom Heidi Stevens has gathered over a decade of momhood

Candid Candace

Chicago Symphony Orchestra Ball benefits education and artistic initiatives



In the living room, pale upholstery works with the homeowners' existing art and includes a smart, versatile swivel chair.

E. JASON WAMBSGANS/TRIBUNE NEWSPAPERS PHOTOS

A thoroughly modern mix

Clean-lined comfort helps a family feel at home in a vintage house

BY TATE GUNNERSON
Tribune Newspapers

"This home was a challenge in many ways," says interior designer Michael Del Piero of the four-bedroom midcentury ranch in River Forest that she designed for Chuck and Minhae Doherty. Originally owned by the reputed mobster Anthony "Big Tuna" Accardo, the house was built in the early 1960s with high-end finishes such as gleaming white terrazzo flooring, plaster moldings and a family room wall clad with onyx boulders.

Over the years, it had fallen into disrepair

and been updated with a French country kitchen that was at odds with the architecture. "Every room was different, and the house felt divided," Minhae Doherty says.

Although the Dohertys purchased the home in 2001, a job opportunity led them to Tokyo in 2002, where they lived for nearly a decade. By the time they returned with their three children in 2011, they had grown accustomed to living in a smaller, brand new home, and they knew the rambling 50-year-old ranch would require a major overhaul to suit their taste and lifestyle.

"I had a tough time adjusting to living in

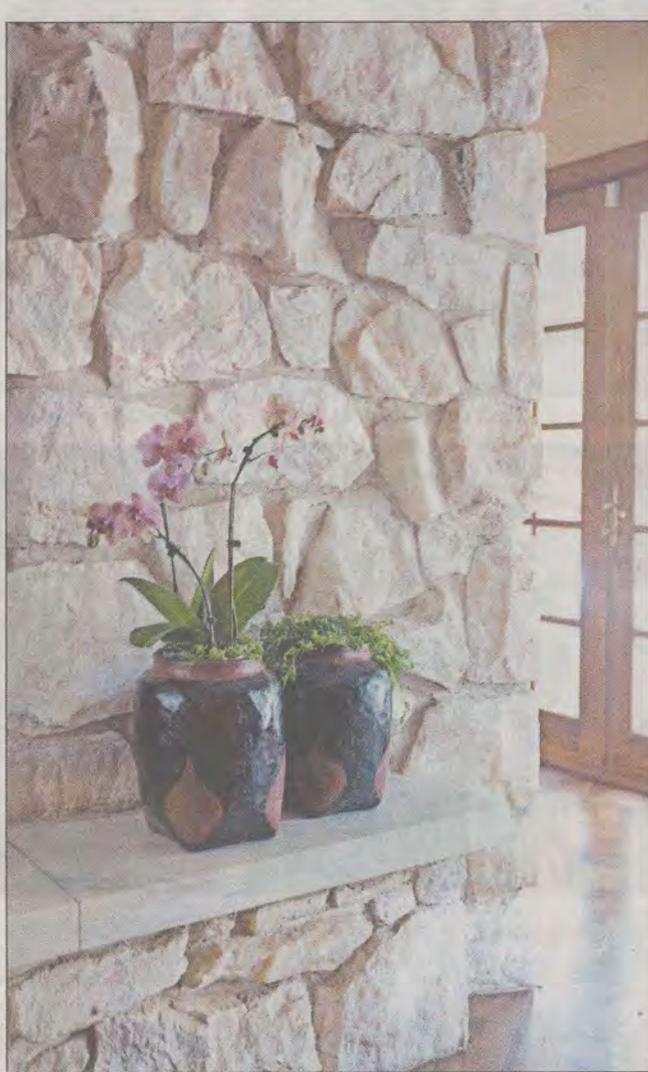
a big old house," Minhae Doherty says. "In Japan, you work your whole life and then build a brand new house."

The couple tasked Del Piero with creating a cohesive look that updated the house without sacrificing its quintessential modernist elements. At the same time, her design needed to be flexible enough to accommodate some of their more traditional furnishings and artwork. Del Piero selected a neutral palette and incorporated custom furnishings with simple lines.

"My design is not usually about having interesting upholstered pieces," Del Piero says. "It's about having the right scale,



In the completely remodeled kitchen, a banquette turns sleek, modern and practical.



The stone fireplace wall, an original feature of the house, remains as a bold statement in the family room.

“I think it’s important to balance soft and hard materials in a room.”

— *Michael Del Piero, interior designer*

able to match them perfectly, and they connect the kitchen to the rest of the house,” the designer says.

In place of the French country-style cabinetry, she outfitted the space with walnut and glass-faced cabinetry from Ernestomeda, an Italian company known for its contemporary designs. White solid surface counter tops and a backsplash of tiny square porcelain tiles provide contrast and complement a white faux leather banquette that Del Piero created for the breakfast nook. “We can easily seat 12 people just in our kitchen, so it’s very good for entertaining,” Chuck Doherty says. “We’re delighted with it.”

The couple also is pleased with their four bathrooms, which were completely redesigned by Christine Julian, of Julian Kitchen Design. Two of them include an enclosed shower and soaker tub, which is a common feature in Japan. “They are hybrid Japanese-western bathrooms,” Min-hae Doherty says.

Indeed, the entire home represents a fusion of influences that Del Piero’s design brings together in a cohesive way. Although it took the Dohertys time to adjust to living in an older home, the changes have helped them to see it in a new light.

“Michael can do modern, but at the same time, she can mix it with the old style,” Min-hae Doherty says. “The flow is so much better now. We’re very happy here.”

Tate Gunnerson is a freelance writer.

appropriate lines and comfort.”

For the spacious formal living room, Del Piero designed a sofa and sofa-sectional upholstered in the same white fabric. In front of each, she placed a custom cocktail table, one a three-legged hand-fabricated iron base by Andrew Stansell, the other a rustic wooden piece manufactured in Thailand by Chicago’s Golden Triangle. A pair of iron chairs provides a striking accent that Del Piero felt the room needed.

“I think it’s important to balance soft and hard materials in a room, especially when I’m dealing with so many neutrals,” she says. “When a room is balanced, you

tend to focus on the people in the room and the conversation. I like to create a backdrop of interesting things which draw your eye and interest into the space.”

The room is full of singular accent pieces, including a colorful painting of a koi fish from the Dohertys’ existing collection and a wall installation consisting of more than 200 cracked porcelain shells with gold-leafed interiors, which Del Piero placed in an artistic pattern on a long curved wall, one of the home’s original architectural features.

Although Del Piero went out of her way to preserve many of the home’s original

features, she eliminated some of the more eccentric ones. An oval skylight in the center of the dining room has been covered with drywall and replaced with a round multi-tier glass chandelier that is shallow enough to be hung in the home despite its relatively low ceilings.

“The shape has a midcentury vibe, so it makes sense with the house,” Del Piero says.

To create that sense of continuity in the kitchen, Del Piero had the ceramic floor tiles replaced with wood flooring that matches the original parquet in the adjacent family room. “The contractor was