

interiors[®]



ART IN DESIGN





ALL THAT JAZZ

INTERIOR DESIGN: CARI GIANNOULIAS

TEXT: THOMAS CONNORS

PHOTOGRAPHY: ERIC HAUSMAN





Vintage apartments are rarely turnkey. Even when they've been shown a little love over the years, most require updating. Some scream for more than that. In the case of a Chicago couple's penthouse in a Gothic style building from the 1920s, not only would the design need to be comfortable and unpretentious, it would need to integrate with the era and vibe of the building. To achieve this, they asked Scott Dresner of Dresner Design to embark on the design-build process, then enlisted Cari Giannoulis for the interior design.

Originally the servants' quarters for the apartment on the floor below, the apartment had some good features, including a handsome fireplace surround in the living room and amply proportioned windows offering views from every room. But it needed a bit more detailing and a more open plan. Taking a cue from period details in the building's lobby, Dresner added a coffered ceiling to the main living space. Knowing that his clients admired classic Parisian apartments, he installed a chevron-patterned floor in the foyer and central hallway. Dresner removed a wall from the cramped kitchen and created a massive island, which Giannoulis surrounded with barstools from A. Rudin. "I designed the island because my client told me that in his previous place, he always preferred sitting at the kitchen island than sitting on his \$30,000 couch," Dresner says.

When it came to the interior design, the clients—an advertising executive/artist and a marketing consultant—gave Giannoulis carte blanche. The sole direction from them was to create a casual home with a neutral aesthetic; an unassuming envelope that would complement the couple's art collection and dovetail with their relaxed lifestyle.

With one of the clients living and working in New York for a good stretch of the project's evolution (the couple commuted back and forth regularly), distance was no impediment when it came to sourcing furniture, fabrics and fixtures. "Every time I find something I love, I hold on to it and when I find the perfect client for it, I match the two up," Giannoulis says. "In this case, I was working with clients who weren't interested in anything showy or flashy, and I'm pretty much the same way with my interiors. I wanted to give them a place that would feel like home, not a showroom."











Everything had to be comfortable, usable," says the homeowner. From a bookcase-lined reading nook with a chair and ottoman Giannoulas designed, covered in a rich Kyle Bunting hide, to the laid-back sofa in the living room upholstered in a white Great Outdoors fabric from Holly Hunt, the apartment projects an effortless chic. "It's all about livable luxury," Giannoulas says. "Nobody wants to watch a friend put a glass down and then cringe because you didn't put out a coaster."

Being on the same page aesthetically certainly helped clients and designer enjoy a satisfying collaboration, but so too did their delight in the process of it all. "One of the fun parts was that after all the basic pieces were in, we added as we went on," says the homeowner. "One day Cari called to say she had come across this great bench for the foyer. And it fits perfectly with the painting we have there." That piece, created by her partner, distills the life of Kerouac to its most basic essences.

Although there's a minimalist vibe at play in the home, the look seems to stem from careful accumulation, not fastidious curating. In the foyer, a green steamer trunk (from Jayson Home and Garden, like the bench nearby) sits below a console table topped with a funky vintage lamp from 1stdibs. In the master bathroom, Giannoulas laid antique runners on the floor to provide a dark, warm contrast to all the marble in the room.







No matter who the client or what the project, Giannoulas believes firmly in the notion of a home that speaks directly of the people who live in it. "You have to include personal pieces," she says. "That's what makes a house feel like a home. You want to be able to talk about the things in your home. You want those stories." For this couple, that meant music and art. His office was designed around his beloved collection of guitars (Fender, Gibson, Epiphone, National and Martin). Elsewhere, a judicious display of art reflects the couple's edgier, more personal sides, from pieces by Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Greg Dickerson and punk impresario and musician Malcolm McLaren to work by Houston-based Randy Twaddle, a college roommate of the homeowner's brother. Looking at a picture of a forlorn house by Mark Beck, the homeowner shares her connection to the canvas. "A friend of mine was visiting and said, 'That's so depressing.' I don't see it that way at all. I grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, and my Mom grew up in this little town in Southeast Missouri and it reminds me of when we would drive down to visit my grandmother and there would be these abandoned shacks or cabins along the highway. So it just reminds me of when I was a kid. To me it's not depressing, at all. It's just Missouri." And this, it's clear, is just "home." ■ *Cari Giannoulas Design, carigiannoulas.com*

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