



### BEST FURNITURE PIECE// MJ WRITING DESK

Industrial details and natural materials combine in this classically refined writing desk that is designed by Frank Ponterio and manufactured by Avrett. Completely customizable, the bronze frame with slightly flared legs supports a vellum-wrapped top and can be sized to any specification. The design was inspired by Ponterio's interest in Chicago's architectural and industrial roots. He worked closely with the craftsmen at Avrett, who are experts in hand-forged iron and steelwork, to fine-tune the design so that it could be customized with brass, wrought iron or bronze. Each piece comes stamped with a hallmark logo bearing both the Frank Ponterio and Avrett logos. **What We Love:** The pairing of natural and exotic materials with hand-forged bronze metalwork makes for a design that is both masculine and elegant. *To the trade, John Rosselli & Associates, The Merchandise Mart, Suite 6158, johnrosselli.com*

## BEST IN DESIGN

PRODUCTS  
& PIECES



### BEST LIGHTING// MOLEKUL CHANDELIER

Trevor O'Neil launched his new lighting collection, Molekul, this past spring, which was inspired by a wooden star installation he created more than a decade ago. The Molekul series takes a similar shape but is lit up from the inside with LED bulbs. Light is channeled in randomized space and distance from its source via chrome steel "atoms" which are connected to the core by acrylic rods covered in rubber. The result? A starry cluster of ambient light. O'Neil's latest concept involves a larger scale and customization options, as there is no limit to how many "atoms" can be added or in what configuration. The pieces are built one at a time in his studio and are only limited by a client's space restrictions and lighting needs. **What We Love:** Modern style is smartly paired with new technology that looks ethereal and elegant. \$3,800 (as shown with eight atoms), Trevor O'Neil Art and Design, 2548 W. Lake St., trevoroneil.com

### BEST RUGS// MARAIS RUG BY AIMEE NEMECKAY AT SAPERE ATELIER

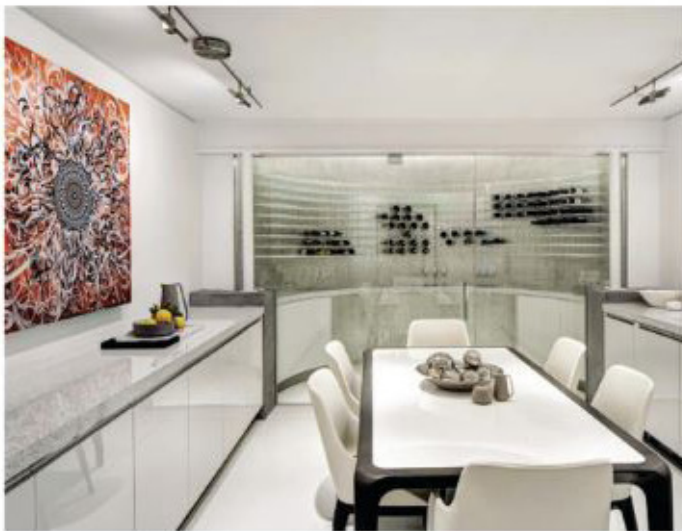
Because the Fredman Design Group saw the need for sophisticated rugs that made a statement, Sapere Atelier was born. Lead designer Aimee Nemeckay's paintings and watercolors are translated into the collection's flat-weave rugs. The latest addition to



the collection is the Marais rug, which is in saturated tones of blue and a pattern that is a fresh twist on a classic chevron. The inspiration for the collection came after FDG traveled to the Far East and experienced the rug-making process, meeting the weavers and seeing the fibers being dyed. After several experiments conducted while working closely with Oscar Tatossian of Oscar Isbertian Rugs, FDG debuted this beautiful, soft silk rug: a high-quality product with a high-impact in any room. **What We Love:** The Marais rug is truly an artwork for the floor and is loyal to the ancient, intricate process of handweaving and hand-dyeing rugs in India and Turkey. \$3,600 for 5 feet by 8 feet rug, Fredman Design Group, 350 W. Erie St., 350west.com



**RAINBOW COLLECTION**  
These collectors aren't afraid of color. A large canvas titled "Do Do Shale" (left) by locally loved artist Alvinne harmonizes with "Kare's," an orange and brown mural on wood by Congolese-born artist Alice Njane.



**WINEFILE**  
Art pairs perfectly with wine in the Gardners' multipurpose gathering space, where a vibrant painting by New York-based artist Shinique Smith provides a vibrant burst of color.

## DISPLAY CASE

Beverly beauty industry insiders Denise and Gary Gardner explore the art of living with art.

By Jessica Cochran

It has oft been said that art collectors in Chicago have a passion uniquely defined by a Midwestern brand of integrity. It's true; art aficionados here are as interested in the art of the idea as they are in the art of the investment. And Beverly-based collectors Denise and Gary Gardner are no exception: With their entrepreneurial foundation in the haircare industry and close ties to the Art Institute of Chicago, the Gardners know a thing or two about beauty—from classic to unconventional.

The understated brick exterior of their early 20th century home on historic Longwood CONTINUED...



...CONTINUED Drive is flanked with classic red terra-cotta tiles and meandering terraces, while the interior is decidedly up-to-date. Each room acts as an individual statement, made possible by the global reach of its collection, prominently featuring artists of color and a whole lot of women in a multitude of genres, from abstraction to text art to portraiture and even video installation.

The basement of a home is often an afterthought, but the Gardners' lower level—out of which they launched a burgeoning business they later sold—is now affectionately called their very own “modern wing.” It features the most contemporary selections from their collection, including “Untitled (Colored People Grid),” a Technicolor grid of portraits and monochrome prints on clay paper by the influential (and everywhere) Carrie Mae Weems, to “Larry,” an important early photograph in the Van Dyke Brown technique by Rashid Johnson, who went from Chicago breakout artist to New York art star in less than a decade.

So how does one convert a basement into a gallery that is haute, homey... and functional? It starts in shades of white. Working with the Susan Fredman Design Group ([fredmandesigngroup.com](http://fredmandesigngroup.com)) and Messette Architects, the Gardners carefully selected elements to create a neutral and comfortable sense of background for their growing collection. Atop white terrazzo floors and amid painted white movable walls featuring recessed wall bases—a special touch that characterizes what designer Barbara Ince refers to as an “editive approach”—contemporary Italian furniture creates a room that is as child friendly as it is welcoming to the art-world elite. And, of



#### WHITE OUT

Clockwise from top: A painting of Nelson Mandela creates perfect perspective for a thoughtful reading room, while custom shelving houses the Gardners' collection of art books; an auspicious entrance, the stairway to the Gardners' lower level is flanked with works by collection artists including Wadsworth Jarrell, Abolade Glover and Xavier Simmons; the brand-new state-of-the-art bathroom boasts custom cabinetry by the Susan Fredman Design Group and a gorgeous waterfall tile scheme.



course, the most serious art collectors moonlight as bibliophiles, so shelving for exhibition catalogs, monographs and the most recent art magazines is never an afterthought. The Gardners' display their art books—and the occasional art miniature such as the brilliant and diminutive Chris Ofili canvas “Priest”—in a custom reading corner, which is perfectly blanketed in natural light.

Kind of like traditional framed family snapshots on a wall, an art collection can provide a glimpse into a family's backstory. So, it is obvious then to anyone lucky enough to visit the Gardner home that this family legacy is smart, curious and deeply dimensional. Inspired? The Gardners would encourage you to follow in their footsteps. According to Gary, when you “shed your comfort zone, you can see so much.” ■



## **/SILVERTABLE HOST/**

clockwise from top left

**CAMBRIA**  
DESIGNED BY FREDHAN DESIGN GROUP

**THE DESIGN CENTER AT THE MERCHANDISE MART**  
DESIGNED BY KADLEC ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN

**DIFFA/CHICAGO AUXILIARY BOARD**  
SACRED JOURNEY FEED YOUR SOUL

**FORUM STUDIO / CLAYCO**  
DESIGNED BY FORUM STUDIO

**HARRINGTON COLLEGE OF DESIGN**  
DESIGNED BY INTERIOR DESIGN STUDENTS

