HISTORY IN THE MAKING

TREASURED HEIRLOOMS GET REPURPOSED TO DRAMATIC EFFECT IN AN URBAN AERIE.

By Katie Anne Orr
Photography by Werner Straube

It takes some imagination to turn discarded flour sacks and old dishcloths into polished urban art. But the team at Tom Stringer Design Partners has plenty of brainpower to go around (tomstringer.com). After two Hyde Park transplants packed up 25 years' worth of belongings and moved them into the heart of the Gold Coast's hustle and bustle, the team was tasked with giving the new space a more debonair look. In many cases, that meant extracting beauty through quite unexpected repurposing.

The husband-and-wife duo was looking to downsize from the 4,500-square-foot home where they'd raised three children (now grown with children of their own). But with several old-fashioned family heirlooms—dishcloths embroidered by the wife's mother while waiting for her father to return from World War II; quilts woven together with old flour sacks by her great-grandmother, who wasted nothing—it was a challenge to shed the Americana vibe and give it a sleeker, more worldly feel. Stringer and his team, Design Director John Cialone and Director of Interior Architecture Rick Wetzel, took on the task with an ease that comes from years of studied expertise. "We gallery-framed them, so now they feel like abstract paintings," Stringer says of the quilts. "We helped her contextualize them in a contemporary way."

The team added African Kuba cloths and Asian textiles into the design as well, increasing the global scale of the home's fibers and placing CONTINUED...

A MODERN MIX
From top: The bright, popping artwork of John Himmelfarb brings a memorable note to the modernity of Hickory Chair Pearson and Oly Studio furnishings; Stringer slimmed down antique possessions and shined up surfaces—like this reflective bronze vinyl in the guest bathroom—for a dramatic, alternative look.

> "I love how rustic, ethnographic art is made more rustic when put on a contemporary console, and vice versa. ... I love the interstitial energy created by objects: wildly eclectic but carefully measured."
>
> **–TOM STRINGER**

COZY CHIC
Clockwise from left: Sunlight streams in somewhere over the rainbow of pillows atop Stringer's custom-designed sectional sofa; the Design Trade's woven chenille headboard adds to the cozy ambience of the guest bedroom; Arteriors makes a worldly statement with its bold brass metal screen in the foyer.

...CONTINUED them near simplistic modern furnishings. "I love how rustic, ethnographic art is made more rustic when put on a contemporary console, and vice versa. Its ancient qualities are magnified," says Stringer. "I love the interstitial energy created by objects: wildly eclectic but carefully measured." The team sourced pieces from global manufacturers around the world and placed them next to stateside objects and fabrics by Oly Studio, Arteriors, Hickory Chair Pearson, and Baker Knapp & Tubbs. The result was a refined version of eclecticism.

The team's other challenge was to create rooms within the full 12th-floor space developed by Jameson Realty Group while still preserving and highlighting the 360-degree views of Chicago's twinkling lights. Replacing all walls and doors running on a central line of the residence with disappearing partitions, they were able to create circulation and flow. The rolling pocket doors retract entirely into the wall, with encasements that belie any hint of a hidden door. "The building architecture has unimpeded high ceilings that create a beautiful play of light and shadows. We didn't want it to feel chopped up; we wanted to celebrate the lovely views," says Stringer. "It feels much more lyrical divided up this way."

This Thanksgiving was the first spent in the new home, a beginning to the couple's new stage of life. "We wanted this to be our adult home," says the wife. This is where she hopes to have impromptu concerts with her grandchildren on the baby grand piano, bake her famous apple cake for her six siblings and make new memories. And, perhaps, recall old ones—of certain heirloom quilts now displayed behind new frames. "Who doesn't love walking out the door and going to Bloomingdale's, all kinds of restaurants [and] the theater?" she says. "I loved Hyde Park for raising my kids. But this is a great place to be."■