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shining through.

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SURE, THE ENTIRE CHICAGO HOTEL WAS GUT RENOVATED WHEN IT WAS CONVERTED INTO RESIDENTIAL CONDOS, BUT IT'S NOT LIKELY THAT MANY OF THE UNITS—IF ANY, EXCEPT FOR THIS ONE—LOOK AS THOUGH YOU'VE TIME-TRAVELED BACK TO EARLY 20TH-CENTURY FRANCE. But that's exactly the feel in this particular residence, built for a philanthropic husband and wife.

The three-bedroom space would be reconstructed as a one bedroom that could accommodate and accentuate the owners' French Art Deco collections of museum-worthy Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann furniture and René Lalique glassworks that the passionately self-educated husband was still putting together. And to give these furnishings a proper environment, the interior design, by Heather Wells and Bruce Fox, and the architecture, by Steve Rugo, should defer to—and complement—the collections. Together with general contractor Neil Peck, the team transformed the space into a residence that's a contemporary study of elegant French décor.

"We were essentially building a background for the collections," says Rugo, who designed a floor plan along two axes, so that aligned



STYLE SELECTION

René Lalique's parakeet motif was discovered in an old workshop and brought to life through the appropriately named lost wax technique, bringing forth a crystal couple perched among flowers. *Perruches Vase, \$64,000; lalique.com*

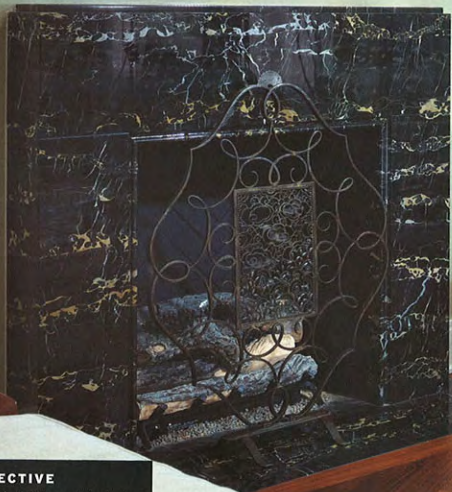
INTERIOR DESIGN Heather Wells and Bruce Fox,

Wells & Fox Architectural Interiors

ARCHITECTURE Steve Rugo, Rugo Raff Ltd., Architects

HOME BUILDER Neil Peck, S.N. Peck, Builder, Inc.

BEDROOMS 1 | BATHROOMS 4 | SQUARE FEET 4,500



SALON SELECTIVE

The 1930s French Art Deco club chairs in the living room are upholstered in a celadon Glant velvet. The circa 1925 sconce above the 1940s armoire is by Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann, as is the oval table in the foreground. The fire screen is by Edgar Brandt.





JEWEL-BOX BANQUETTE

In the kitchen, vintage Warren McArthur chairs pull up to a banquette covered in a Rose Tarrow fabric. The cornflower blue upholstery is inspired by the center framed pastel drawing: All nine works depict Lalique jewelry and accessories. The table is custom by Wells & Fox Architectural Interiors.

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rooms open unto themselves through a series of pocket doors. And since Art Deco furnishings were generally made of rich materials, similar luxurious elements were sourced: Floors throughout are onyx or patterned walnut, mimicking the era's fondness for marquetry; wallpaper is silvery; and ovals, a common motif in Deco, are seen in carpet patterns and table shapes.

Indeed, ovals influenced the design of the entry rotunda, where niches and custom shelving display a collection of Lalique vases meticulously



FRENCH MENU

Cannelée dining chairs encircle the grand oval 1930s table featuring a dark Macassar ebony top and butterscotch Amboyna base, all by Ruhlmann. Laliq's Ananas et Grenades plafonnier, which required a museum-like installation, was originally made for the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.



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arranged by the husband. Says Peck, who designed the area, "He had very specific ideas about the installation: uplighting, downlighting, and the size and layout of the room."

There's an emphasis on these kinds of details throughout the house: The celadon-painted living room walls feature a strié in which a vertical application of glaze suspends chips of light-reflecting mica, and all window casings feature full-height door jambs and silver leaf trim. "That's a trick from Gothic architecture," notes Fox. "The verticality carries the eye up, making the room look taller," he says, explaining that it also gives the walls a luminous, textured feel. Even the media room's built-in cabinetry, made of olive wood, has an iridescent quality that lends a sense of movement as you walk by. "A lot of what we did is shiny," says Wells,

SILVERY GLOW

At the far end of the living area, a Ruhlmann settee flanks a pair of armchairs, also by the designer, which are covered in a custom Lalique print by Prette & Cie in Lyon, France. The custom silk rug by Wells & Fox from Martin Patrick Evan in New York adds a lustrous touch.



STYLE SELECTION

This snake-inspired Edgar Brandt and Daum table lamp, circa 1925, was created using gilt-bronze, amber-colored glass and marble. *La Tentation Table Lamp*, est. \$30,000-\$50,000; sothebys.com

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"because Art Deco pieces are highly glossed and often made of rare wood that has some interesting complication to it."

The husband became interested in Lalique glass some 20 years ago after reading a book by Nicholas Dawes, an antiques dealer and appraiser who's an acknowledged authority on the designer. The soon-to-be collector tracked down Dawes in New York City and was so impressed by Dawes' knowledge that his interest was even further piqued; soon he was reading up on different expressions of Art Deco. In the process, he discovered the architect and designer Ruhlmann—and the obsession took hold.





EXPERT PANEL

Three Ruhlmann chairs—the pair covered in Edelman Leather and one covered in a pattern by Prella & Cie—sit before a contemporary sofa by Mattalano in the media room. Claude R. Bentley's *Arcana #2*, 1956, hangs above; *The Kiss*, a sculpture, is by Jacques Schnier.



ROOM TO REFLECT

Onyx flooring and countertops provide rich, reflective surfaces for the master bath. A Kohler sink sits in a custom bow-front glass cabinet; the faucet is by Waterworks. A swirly silver-leaf pattern was hand-stenciled on the walls by Hester Painting & Decorating.

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"Collecting is an exciting adventure for me," says the husband, who finds it as rewarding as the financial payoff for investing in the valuables. Recalling one journey, he describes how the dining room's grand 400-pound Lalique chandelier—it hangs from a steel structure that had to be built into the ceiling—was one he was first shown in a garage in Europe. Even the dining table underneath the chandelier, a Ruhlmann piece so big that Wells made a paper template of it to see if it would even fit in the room, was once owned by Andy Warhol. "Every piece," says the proud homeowner, "has a story." **L**





X FACTOR

A Lalique chandelier hangs in the master bedroom, where a Ruhlmann vase sits on a secretary and chair, also by the designer. The X stools are by Diego Giacometti. The painted panels were inspired by the vellum paneling seen in the work of French interior designer Jean-Michel Frank.