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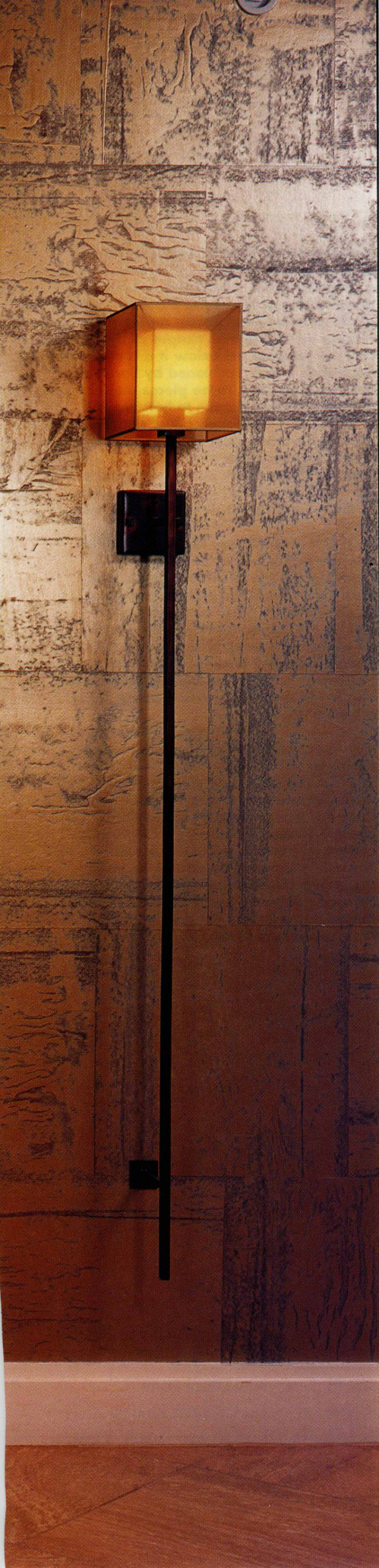


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Down to Earth

There is something to be said about the excitement of sitting before a blank canvas. After all, the point of all that white space is to fill it in with scenes of beauty.

That same feeling is true for homes as well as art. For one local couple, a professional sculptor and his wife, the house they built in the woods of Long Grove was architecturally breathtaking in its Prairie style-inspired façade and mix of wood, stucco and stone, but it was missing something inside. The neutral backdrop and vast open space, as it turns out, was a little too stark for a pair who have a background and keen interest in all things visual. "We wanted to incorporate a lot of wood and clean lines because we wanted the house to blend into nature and didn't want an overly formal feel," recalls the owner. "But although bones of the house were great, it just wasn't very warm and user friendly. When you walked in, it was almost like walking into a hotel."

Realizing once they moved in and lived there a while that they needed to infuse some warmth and personal touches into the cavernous space, the owners enlisted designer Dann Foley, who had decorated the homes of some of their friends and neighbors.

"Part of the problem was that it was a huge, white, blank house. So

BY LYNN PETRAK

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID SCHILLING



(opening spread) Reflecting what the home is about, literally and figuratively, is a dramatic hand carved ebony-finished mirror in the entryway, a piece that was made to order from Italian artisans. Picking up on the oval shapes of the mirror, the designer set below it a custom Art Deco-style bench, fashioned by the same European makers. Those pieces meld into the background, thanks to handmade wallcovering in a tobacco leaf pattern and a pair of warm amber-colored sconces with a square paper shade covered by another sheer shade made from gold silk fabric. "You get that glowing appearance to them," points out designer Dann Foley.

(left) The owner chose his and his wife's favorite pieces for his home gallery, including vessels of different sizes and finishes. Because the gallery includes a cabinet to store other pieces, he often rotates the display to reflect his mood. All of that is a marked change from the previous display area—a large counter that was moved to the home's lower level and is still used to showcase some of his other works.

(next page) Looking out over the scenic property, the breakfast nook is a cozy spot for starting the day or, at other times, for a quiet respite. The cool marble floor and open windows bespeak the clean lines that the owners incorporated in the architecture, while a personal warmth is supplied by one of the vessels the owner displayed alongside the wood-covered peninsula and a pendant light fixture that matches the golden, camel tones elsewhere in the space.


it was different in that for most of my work I usually say, 'Let's talk about what you want and need,' and instead, I had to go in and talk about what was wrong with a room first and how to make it right," explains Dann.

The couple and their designer first set their sights on the expansive great room, which originally featured a sparse arrangement of couches and chairs and a large ledge on which to display some of the sculptor's ceramic vessels. "It was an enor-

mous room, and the question was how to get that right instead of just sticking furniture in there," remembers Dann.

Now, the room has been brought down to scale, thanks to a warm color scheme with foliage-inspired shades of crimson,





The dining room is a study in shape. Rounded lines in the alabaster light fixtures, the centerpiece of descending ceramic globes, some circular patterns on hanging screens by the doorway, the square wall collage called "Exponential" by artist Jennifer Hollack, the rectangular dining table, Deco-inspired mohair chairs, and the angle-set marble tile floor all create angles and patterns that are captivating and add interest to the room. Lest the space look too stark for a dining room meant for sharing repasts, the designer added a backdrop of paneled walls and painted the arched ceiling a soft gray-blue hue.





Just past the entryway to the home, visitors are greeted with what the owners now call their "presentation table." The vignette breaks up some of the open space between the foyer and nearby dining room and also provides a hint of the home's décor. The table, designed by Dann Foley with the owner, was inspired by one of her favorite Art Deco designers from Paris, Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann. A serene glazed ceramic Buddha that Dann found for the couple is the center of the presentation, surrounded by vessels filled with fresh flowers in coordinated neutral colors and a grand willow branch. "The overall effect from the floor to the top of the willow is almost 12 feet tall and with the 22-foot ceiling in the foyer, it was a question of scale to make it feel closer and cozier," explains Dann.

gold, copper and green—"I wanted to bring the outside in," says the owner of her choices—and a new floor plan comprised of separate seating areas. Each seating area, or vignette, features custom-made furniture constructed to suit the owners' style preferences and their desire for rich textures, such as a chenille-covered ottoman, a bronze-hued sofa, and diminutive Italian chairs finished in authentic silver leaf. Underfoot, luxurious floor coverings in linen and silk also serve to divide the spaces and provide supple texture, while heavy-weight silk taffeta drapes in earthy russet enrobe the room without overpowering it.

Such remarkable detail also adds to the immerse-yourself feel of the space. The owner's extensive knowledge of Art Deco style, for instance, led her and the designer to collaborate on the striking platinum-finished alabaster light fixtures in the great room, which are exact replicas of the Deco-era chandeliers at New York's famed Radio City Music Hall. Those looking skyward to admire the chandeliers also note the hand-made multi-layered wallpaper with a unique stainless steel finish, covering the ceiling between the white beams.

The fireplace, too, was transformed from a rather monolithic element to a near work of art in itself. "It's over six feet wide and the way it was detailed before made it look very squat and vertical, so we literally tore off every detail," shares Dann. In its place: hand-made tile with a metallic bronze glaze inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright design and a chimney covered in custom wallpaper that resembles, as the designer puts it, "the texture and appearance of old leather." Then there is the screen, another custom, hand-wrought piece that has become an artistic element, rather than a functional afterthought.

All of this handiwork, however, does not mean that the great room completely touts form over function. A flat-screen television, for example, hangs unobtrusively above the fireplace for use in the main seating area. "Before, we had a cabinet, but if the door was open you couldn't see the TV because the angle was bad. So I asked Dann to put a frame on it and leave the television out, and it's worked out very well," the owner remarks.

Meanwhile, befitting the husband's vocation and passion, the couple also decided to use the great room as a gallery

of sorts for some of his works. Instead of placing them along the existing ledge, however, Dann suggested creating built-in niches along paneled walls, complete with their own recessed lighting and backdrop of intense mahogany, walnut and ebony finishes. The vessels displayed in the niches complement other nearby artworks from the couple's collection, including several paintings set on custom-made, hand-finished easels.

For the gallery, the owners chose some of the sculptor's favorite pieces for sentimental reasons. "That was important,

because for me, I am around my 'friends' when I am with my work," the ceramicist explains, adding that he included plans for display areas in the earliest blueprint stage and worked with Dann to create the niches that could be easily rearranged. "There are pieces in the cabinet that are not even showing that I bring in sometimes because I want to see something new and rotate my work."

If the great room is the heart of the home, the foyer is the face, or expression, that suggests its mood. To give a sense of perspective and balance to the space, Dann

The original plans for the home included a sunroom at the back of the house as a place to retreat and take in the view from outdoors. However, after they moved in, the owners found they weren't using it, until designer Dann Foley infused some warmth into the space with the same taffeta drapes used in the great room, along with a striped rug in colors reminiscent of an autumn day and a large ottoman that he had re-covered in a zebra pattern to enrich the chairs that originally were placed in the great room before his redesign. The designer also brought in a cabinet that he topped with the owner's handmade artwork, chosen for the way the muted tones of the vessels fit into the space.





graced the foyer with a piece that stands for both of those principles: a glazed ceramic Buddha figure set atop what the owners now call the “presentation table.” The Deco-influenced custom-built table is topped with other elements such as vessels, fresh roses, and bowls in similar shades of bone and cream.

To frame the presentation table and separate the foyer from the adjacent dining room, Dann designed and hung a pair of floating mahogany screens with circular patterns reminiscent of Art Deco design. The pattern complements other geometric shapes in the dining room, including a striking rectangular table rimmed by mohair-covered chairs, an original wall collage fashioned from glass, metal and Lucite squares and a sculpture of descending white orbs that serves as a centerpiece. The wood in the floating screens, meantime, is similar to the wood paneling that has been added to the dining room wall to incorporate greater color and depth.

Behind the dining room is the sun room, previously a seldom-used open space.

Again, the owners and their designer were faced with the challenge of creating an area that was neither stuffy nor sparse, but more livable and coordinated with the rest of the main floor. As its function suggests, the sunroom features a fantastic view of the wooded lot, which is bucolic all year round, whether carpeted with fresh fallen snow or abloom in summer greenery. “It’s very much about the view so it was kept very clean,” says Dann.

Clean, however, doesn’t mean austere. While the sunroom details are not overwhelming they are evocative, such as a set of Art Deco inspired chairs set around a rattan ottoman by McGuire covered with a zebra pattern and a cheeky Art Deco “martini table” for an effect that is both visual and tactile. Here, too, the owners’ collections infuse the space with meaning and sentiment, from select Daum glass animal pieces from the wife’s collection to some of the husband’s pieces of art.

Elsewhere on the main floor, the view from the large windows in the breakfast room is also beautiful any time of year. To

(upper right) Befitting a space that’s about perspective and evocative color, this dainty chair is set in front of the imposing fireplace area. With its peridot wool bouclé fabric and curved lines, the chair brings the seating area down to scale and lends a European flavor to the room, since it was made by hand in an Italian workshop. “They are also hand finished in silver leaf—they are pretty spectacular,” notes designer Dann Foley, who as he did with other furnishings in the home, also designed this chair.

(middle right) Not all was lost when the owners transformed their home and added mostly new furniture. These chairs, for instance, were brought from the original great room into the breakfast room and simply reupholstered by Bernhardt Contract.

(lower right) The owner’s Art Deco influence is evident in her dining room chairs, which feature combinations of angular and curved shapes and a mohair fabric in a silvery tone reminiscent of the 1920s. The chairs, as with the dining table, were part of the family’s original collection.

(opposite page) To be sure, there are now many sitting areas in which to relax in the main room of the home, including this intimate spot near the picture window at the far end of the space. Framed by iridescent silk taffeta curtains—“It creates this effect of ball gowns in the windows,” explains the designer—and a pair of black shaded lamps with gold-leaf embellishments, the niche includes a large custom daybed in a russet and gold chenille fabric and a low black lacquer cocktail table with a silver leaf top, flanked by Roman-inspired tables. Things of meaning are included in the vignette, including pieces from the owner’s collection of Daum glassware, including animal figures and bowls.





The couple who built the home wanted a great room with clean lines and an open feel, but found that things were a little too free form with an abundance of white space. Consulting with designer Dann Foley, they brought the large area down to scale with touches like custom stainless steel finished wallpaper hung between the ceiling beams, rust painted walls, custom tile and wallpaper covering the fireplace, floor lamps edged with silver leaf over golden-hued handmade shades, and defined seating areas with custom-made furniture. Wood paneling finished in an espresso-hued blend of walnut, ebony and mahogany along the far wall also imbues a luxurious depth, while the owners' artistic bent is showcased in a specially designed gallery filled with large-scale vessels crafted by the husband, and a chandelier that is a duplicate of one in Radio City Music Hall that the wife loved for its Deco flair.





give the view its proper due, the breakfast room features subtle window treatments fashioned from a woven fabric with a grid pattern, and an eating area with simple, yet striking Art Deco influence.

In keeping with the owners' intrinsic

love of art, it was not out of character for them to incorporate artistic works in this space as well, such as a vessel tucked into a corner on the floor and some other pieces lining a rounded wood peninsula that divides the breakfast room from the adja-

cent kitchen. "It doesn't matter that this is a kitchen—art is part of their everyday life," Dann points out.

For the owners, their home has become a self portrait of sorts and one that, in terms of everyday living, is priceless. "If



Sitting on the low bench, gazing at original artworks, one might imagine that he or she is in a museum. It is indeed a gallery, but a personal one for the ceramist/owner to display some of his artworks, including vessels set in backlit rectangular niches and a pair of paintings hung on easels. His spouse, meanwhile, added her own talent to the space by hand finishing the stainless steel easels (which are also adjustable and include built-in lights) in a warmer bronze tone to complement the richly stained walls and the rich crimson and gold Scalamandr  fabric on the custom-made bench, fashioned by craftsmen in Italy. The paintings on the easels were painted by Shana Dominguez.

someone had said to me before, 'Let's use lamps with gold finish on them,' I'd say, 'Ewww,' but it works, because there is elegance to this house without there being a sense of 'Who are these people and why do they have such fancy stuff?'" says the

owner, adding, "I loved my home before, but now I really love it. One of the nicest things people say when they come in is not how big it is, but how warm it is and how it reflects us." **CHG**