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IN GOOD TASTE

WRITTEN BY **LIZ ARNOLD**
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UNLIKE THE REST OF HIS GO-GO LIFESTYLE, THIS CHICAGO HOMEOWNER, A BUSINESSMAN, TOOK HIS TIME GETTING AROUND TO UPDATING THIS TWO-BEDROOM LOFT CONDO IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF LINCOLN PARK—HE BOUGHT THE PLACE IN 1990 AND LAST RENOVATED IT IN 1992. But, after a 25-minute meeting with Lisa Wolfe, of Lisa Wolfe Design in Chicago—who teamed up with Shaumburg-based architect Mark Di Ganci, of Design Studio 24, and general contractor Carlos Suastegui, of Space Lab, also in Chicago—they were off and running on a whirlwind redesign that kept Wolfe on her toes. “He’s a fast-paced guy who works out of his house, a hardcore thrill-seeker, someone who travels the world and jumps out of helicopters and goes skiing,” she says. “He’s always doing something. He doesn’t sit still.” Indeed, over the two years they worked together on this project, the duo spoke on the phone just a handful of times, relying mainly on text messaging for communication.

The condo, with its open-plan living-and-dining area and double-story foyer, from where the home’s loft is visible, reflects the unusual proportions of the 1875 schoolhouse in which it is located: 10-foot-high windows and varying ceiling heights. The first matter of importance—initially the only matter—was gutting the kitchen. “It was straight out of the early 1990s,” says Wolfe.

INTERIOR DESIGN Lisa Wolfe, ASID, Lisa Wolfe Design		
ARCHITECTURE Mark Di Ganci, AIA, Design Studio 24, LLC		
HOME BUILDER Carlos Suastegui, Space Lab		
BEDROOMS 2	BATHROOMS 3	SQUARE FEET 2,800



OLD SCHOOL

Near the entry, and paired with the resident's own writing desk, is a chair original to the 1875 schoolhouse building, a historic landmark. The stairs lead to the loft's media room.

"There was black granite everywhere." But, she says, as they walked around the house, expanding the focus as they went, "I got his design sense right away. He had a lot of beautiful rugs and antiques, pieces with a bit of history." The fact that an unusable Baroque-style piano, one he had no intention of playing, sat at the foot of the stairs because he appreciated its curves, was an inspirational cue. So was the beautiful writing desk that he paired with a framed poster of the British band UB40. "He likes classic pieces but is anything but conventional," she says. "He has a sophisticated palette with sort of a distinguished Ralph Lauren style."



MELTING POT

The kitchen anchors one end of the open-plan living-and-dining area. Dark, distressed alder cabinets from Creative Builders and a Flemish painting above the stainless-steel Wolf range impart a traditional feel, but the sofa at the dining table (both by Hickory Chair), the Halo Styles bar chairs and a Samsung LCD television create a casual vibe. The pendant is by Corbett Lighting. Appliances from Abt Electronics.



LUCKY STRIPE
Striped wallpaper by Printers Guild Productions, sourced at the Merchandise Mart, lines the wall when entering the living- and-dining area. A Henredon console table with a marble top, bronze-tone sconces from Hudson Valley at Idlewood Electric and a cast-iron horse head from the Kane County Flea Market in St. Charles offer regal touches.

The client’s only prerequisite for the kitchen was red knobs for the oven, the distinctive feature of models from the Wolf brand. The rest was up to the designer, who added rich details like traditional molding and corbels; dark, distressed woods; gray granite countertops; and seeded glass cabinets. Leather-seated barstools at the counter complement the casual mix of chairs and a gold-tone velvet-upholstered sofa at the walnut dining table. Di Ganci organized the rooms to improve function, incorporating dead space. “You want to steal every inch,” he says. “It’s a condo, so it’s limited by its parameters, which pushes you to maximize the size of the interiors.”



TRUE COLORS
The seating area in the living room is a mix of lively patterns inspired by the resident’s antique rug. The Hickory Chair sofa, from Walter E. Smithe, is covered in a stripe from Brunswick & Fils. The blue-and-white fabric on the chair, also from Brunswick & Fils, is the flip side of a print depicting a warrior on a stallion going into battle. The chair is from Drexel Heritage. Textures add a luxurious touch: A custom ottoman is covered in black velvet from Robert Allen, and the resident’s own antique chair features a crimson-red velvet from Brunswick & Fils.



DISTINGUISHED PANEL

Multiple seating areas in the master bedroom provide workstations for the resident, who conducts business from home. Elegant oak paneling balances the rustic feel of the room's exposed beams. The built-in bench, custom by Eurocraft and upholstered in Kravet fabrics, ends in an alcove where a window was discovered during renovations. The distressed dresser is by Noir, and the sconces are by Visual Comfort, all found at the Merchandise Mart.



BOOK NOOK

A cozy corner of built-in bookshelves in the master bedroom is within arm's reach of a Henredon desk that is paired with a chair covered in velvet from Kravet. The Albert English bronze-iron desk lamp was found at Mecox Gardens; the maple hardwood flooring is from Home Carpet One.

Wolfe designed the adjacent living area using the palette of the client's antique rug: faded magenta, peacock blue and gold. "He really took a chance on some of the things I showed him," she says, namely the striped eggplant-and-charcoal sofa or the red fabric on a side chair with a gold diamond pattern. "Not many guys would go for that."

The stairs from this area lead to the loft, which houses a cozy media room. The design team knocked out a wall and installed an iron railing to allow light into the previously dark space. Stairs that lead down from the living area open up the



SUNKEN TREASURE
The lower-level master bath features a mosaic floor design from Urban Archaeology. Space Lab installed the custom cabinetry and vanity, where polished nickel faucets by Rohl and gold-framed mirrors add a bit of polish. The leather chair and ottoman are from Restoration Hardware; the recycled railroad-tie bundle stool was discovered at Zeeba Home in the Merchandise Mart.

master bedroom, which was formerly two separate spaces. Wood paneling in the now-spacious room, says Wolfe, gives it “something like a gorgeous hotel-in-the-country feel.” Cushioned benches all along one wall tuck into a nook at the end, where a window was discovered in an old mechanical closet. The resident, who works on his laptop around the house, declares this cove his favorite spot.

“This was the easiest project I’ve ever done,” says Wolfe. “It came so naturally, partly because he has such good taste and what he already had was well taken care of. Not to mention,” she adds, “his energy level was a breath of fresh air.” **L**



UNITED FRONT
In the bedroom, a bowl chandelier from Oly at Mecox Gardens is a glamorous counterpoint to the hand-rubbed, black mahogany bed by Noir from Casa Bella in the Merchandise Mart. The mirror above the fireplace is by Global Views; the dragon on the hearth beneath is from Kravet. A ponyhide rug from Millionaire Rejects and Ralph Lauren bedding unify the colors and textures of the room.