



This photo: The living room's colorful painting by Frank Stella inspired the home's palette. "This house is all about contemporary art mixing with high-quality antiques and timeless contemporary upholstery," designer Tom Stringer says. **Opposite:** Lofty ceilings and neutral walls open up the living room and spaces throughout the house.

ALL THE *right moves*

Soothing shades of blue—punctuated with streaks of jewel tones—roll through this Chicago home in a most delightful way.

writers Jenny Bradley Pfeffer and Mara Boo photographer Werner Straube producer Hilary Rose

This photo: The dining room is a daring mix of contemporary and timeless. A 6-foot-tall antique Italian chandelier reflects the patina of brass frames housing Andy Warhol prints of Grace Kelly. **Opposite:** Linear forms rendered in classic stone and stucco lend distinction to the exterior of the home.



S

Sometimes it takes more than a little nip and tuck to reveal true beauty. A bit of revitalization, so to speak. Such was the case with this contemporary Georgian home overlooking Lake Michigan in Chicago. While the architecture

was picture-perfect, the decades-old interiors needed a facelift. “It was a beautiful house to begin with,” designer Tom Stringer says. “The bones were great. We just performed a little surgery on the interiors. Our goal was simply not to ruin architect Larry Booth’s lovely work.”

Change came in the form of a worldly mix of antiques and classic upholstered pieces that breathe a graceful elegance into the home’s more modern shell. A potent cocktail of traditional and contemporary blends deliciously with a palette of rich blue, terra-cotta, and golden yellow. “It’s a classic color scheme,” Stringer says. “And we used it in a way that’s as symmetrical as the architecture. The combination repeats in inverse proportions throughout the house to keep things flowing.”

United by the palette, antiques with disparate provenances and reproduction pieces appear as though they have grown up together. “There’s an overt European elegance to the interiors,” Stringer says. “To me, there’s no better way to celebrate contemporary architecture than to juxtapose less contemporary elements against it. Antiques look more luscious in a contemporary environment. It makes for an interesting mix.”

Upping the glam factor, Stringer used elaborate portieres to delineate the main floor rooms. Paired with antiques—Italian inlaid commodes, an ornate 6-foot-tall Italian chandelier, and an English antique dining table—the sumptuous treatments set a formal tone in the dining room. A pair of Warhol prints injects an irreverent edge, taming the room’s solemnity.



In the kitchen, Stringer let the interiors bow to the home’s natural surroundings. A wall of windows framing a view of the lake acts as artwork against pale taupe and steel blue cabinets. Honed Calacatta Gold marble countertops add an air of serenity, keeping distractions to a minimum.

Likewise, windows in the master bedroom are framed with draperies of pale blue wool with hand-appliquéd borders that mimic the lake’s calming hue. “It feels as though you’re floating above the bluffs at the lake’s edge,” Stringer says. “We tried to capture that amazing color and bring it indoors as well.”

Amid the blue, a four-poster with hints of gold leaf serves as the room’s centerpiece, an elegant counterpoint to more delicate pieces like gilded fauteuils with blue velvet cushions and a refined coffee table. Together, they create a space that is grand yet inviting. Handsome, yet feminine. “At the end of the day, it’s just a happy house,” Stringer says. “Who wouldn’t want to wake up here?”

FOR RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 94.

Functionality is well-served in the kitchen. Double islands offer maximum counter space and storage, while a secondary prep kitchen hides messy jobs. A pullout trolley provides easy access to small breakfast appliances like the toaster, coffeemaker, and grinder. "To me, kitchen design is about creative problem solving," Stringer says.





This photo: A gilded chandelier and traditional pinch-pleat draperies add timeless flair to modern bath fixtures. **Opposite:** Casual shades balance the master bedroom's more formal, hand-appliquéd curtains, just as the sofa balances the gilded fauteuils flanking it.



PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHER: Jorge Gera

Q&A with DESIGNER TOM STRINGER

Chicago interior designer Tom Stringer would rather channel the interests of his clients than impose a "signature look" upon their homes. Still, he claims a soft spot for traditional design.

Q: *How do you define traditional style?*

A: I like to present tradition in a forward-thinking light. Think of it this way: Antiques are better appreciated when they're accompanied by contemporary furniture, and vice versa.

Eclecticism is where I'm at, but mine is a fairly studied version. I don't believe in throwing all different things together in a room and calling it eclectic. There's a lot to be gained from carefully looking at all objects and their pairings.

Q: *What is it about traditional style that appeals to your clients?*

A: There's comfort in the familiar. There's also a convenience factor, since people inherit stuff. I also find younger clients want to buy older pieces out of a sense of environmentalism.

If you want to be green, simply go shopping at an antiques market. It's the ultimate way to recycle.

Q: *What role does color play in a traditional space?*

A: I think vivid colors have a place, as long as they're used simply. To me, that means as solids and textures, not as patterns. Bright colors feel more sophisticated in the context of a fairly muted palette. Think hot pink and lime green with taupe and bronze, not bright white.

Q: *What's the first antique you ever bought?*

A: I still have it! It's in my bedroom—a single-door, mirror-front French armoire. I bought it with a \$300 birthday check from my grandmother when I was a sophomore in college.

Q: *Name one thing every traditional room needs.*

A: Something contemporary. Seriously. A contemporary glass lamp on the fussiest antique will completely change the dynamic of a room.

Q: *What should you skip?*

A: Wildly patterned draperies. They're never going to stand the test of time. And if you absolutely must have cabbage roses, put them on throw pillows.