

# New Vocabulary

Bespoke millwork and worldly influences transform an apartment with unparalleled views into a luxurious urban retreat for a couple ready for their next act.

By Tate Gunnerson  
Photography by Jorge Gera

“We do two things very well,” interior designer Tom Stringer admits. “We help our clients create a sense of space, and we help them tell their story.”

In this case, Stringer was hired to help write a new chapter for a financial executive and his wife, who had recently purchased a sprawling pied-à-terre with a spectacular balcony that stretches across the east and south sides of the building. “Every major



**VERTICAL SANCTUARY**  
The living room walls feature a cross-strie glaze finish and symmetrical, framed Taoist shaman's scrolls from Primitive Living + Collecting. Designers Tom Stringer and John Cialone reupholstered the antique Louis XV fauteuil chairs in Glant Couture and Jim Thompson Thai silk fabrics. The Barnsley swivel lounge chairs are a Tom Stringer design for Textstyle and feature a plush velvet, while the Holly Hunt cocktail table is a modern counterpoint.



**DESIGN LINES**  
The kitchen backsplash is custom-etched Thassos marble that is complemented by the ecru island sourced through Stone Design. The custom Roman shades are in a Brentano fabric with Samuel & Sons Espadrille Striped border trim.



**NEW TRADITION**  
Reinforcing the studied eclecticism throughout the condo, the 18th century English secretary with lacquered illustrated panels is paired with a contemporary chair.

room has French doors leading onto the terrace,” Stringer explains. “You get Lincoln Park, the North Pond, the Conservatory, the lake and the downtown skyline all right outside of their living room.”

After stripping the apartment to the studs, Stringer and designer partner John Cialone reconfigured the interior, raising doorway heights and thickening walls to create a more substantial, stately appearance that also disguises formerly exposed building columns and creates space for hidden storage. “They look like architectural panels, but they are touch-latch,” Stringer explains. “The layout is not dissimilar to the original, but all the details have changed.”

In the oval entry foyer, wide plank walnut floors and crisp white walls enhance the handsome bespoke chair rail that Stringer designed for the space. An Indian tree-of-life bronze sculpture is displayed alongside blue-and-white Chinese pottery on an antique Biedermeier table. “There is a rich eclecticism in this apartment,” Stringer explains, “but it’s quiet and deeply studied.”

In the formal living room, contemporary pieces co-exist alongside a pair of antique French chairs and an 18th century English secretary with lacquered illustrated panels. One wall of the secretary was upholstered to match the butter-yellow walls and conceals an entire array of speakers. “It is the first time we’ve done that installation, and it’s amazing,” Stringer explains. “When the music is playing, it sounds



**VINTAGE GLAMOUR**  
An early modernist oil painting by Myron Kozman adds color to the formal dining room, while the African raffia hat adds texture and personality. The antique rug is from Minasian Rug Company—“I supplied the color scheme, and they dragged a ton of rugs over to the house so we could see them in the light,” says Stringer. “In one Saturday morning, we had all the rugs we needed for the house.”

#### DEEP STUDY

The library shelves showcase pieces from the owners' various collections, including fertility dolls. A handwoven Turkish rug from Minasian Rug Company and a sofa in the same warm shade balance the blue lacquered walls, while a Victorian gilded faux-bamboo chandelier with a trio of emerald-green glass lenses adds an unexpected touch.



**SERENE SCENE** From top: The master bedroom's light-blue wall has a glazed finish, accented by Tamar Kander's "Listening To Ela" from Gruen Gallery behind the chair and R. LeRoy Turner's "Untitled (Reclining Nude)" by the bed. An antique Gustavian chest of drawers from Cupboards & Roses Swedish Antiques is balanced with a plush lounge chair by Roman Thomas in Ebanista fabric; gilded French sconces and custom mirror panels add drama to the dining room.



like you could be in a concert hall."

The music drifts into the elegant formal dining room, which has been outfitted with custom millwork and handmade antiqued mirror wall panels that reflect the twinkling city lights. Although the owner initially balked at the idea, Stringer lobbied for their inclusion and eventually won her over. "I finally caved in, and I absolutely love the warmth and patina the mirrored panels add," the wife explains. "If we have bad ideas or make mistakes, Tom and John will gently guide us to decisions that we won't regret later."

Flanking the room are a modern bronze waterfall-style counsel and a 19th century wood French sideboard with a marble top that displays an African raffia hat and other unique pieces that Stringer helped his clients collect. The blend of modern elements with continental European antiques, 20th century American artwork and more rustic accessories is a far cry from the clients' primary residence, which is filled with English antiques. "At a certain point in life, people start asking themselves what they really want," Stringer explains. "They realize

that they don't need a traditional set of clothes in order to be taken seriously."

A complement to the leafy treetop views and an acknowledgement of the ever-present expanse of water that looms so prominently in the distance, the blue tones in the dining-room rug reverberate through the interior and into the library, which has paneled walls and a coffered ceiling all lacquered in an enveloping Prussian blue hue. "It's our cozy, comfy space. I like to sit on the couch and look out at Lake Shore Drive," the wife explains. "In the winter, it's the warmest room. It just feels like it's hugging you."

Finally finished with the extensive project, the couple find themselves spending more and more time in the city, checking out the trendy new restaurants and taking in more shows and concerts than they have in years. "We can have a far more leisurely meal and then just hop in an Uber, so it's a totally different experience," the wife explains. "This is a relaxing sanctuary. We feel like we're on vacation when we're here." ■

## DESIGN DETAILS

TYPE  
**Condo**

LOCATION  
**Lincoln Park**

INTERIOR DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE  
**Tom Stringer Design Partners**  
tomstringer.com

BUILDER  
**Tip Top Builders Inc.**  
tiptopbuilders.com

WALL FINISHING  
**Minnihan Painting**  
minnihanpainting.com

LIGHTING CONTROLS  
**Premiere Systems**  
premieresystems.com

RESOURCES  
**Armand Lee & Co Ltd.**  
Custom mirror panels in dining room  
armandlee.com

**Baker Furniture**  
Table lamps in dining room  
bakerfurniture.com

**David Sutherland**  
Christian Liagre lamp in living room  
davidsutherlandshowroom.com

**Design Within Reach**  
Saarinen table in kitchen  
dwr.com

**Edelman**  
Custom upholstery on kitchen chairs  
and master bedroom headboard  
edelmanleather.com

**The Golden Triangle**  
Chinese lidded vessel in rotunda  
goldentriangle.biz

**Holly Hunt**  
Living room sofa, cocktail table  
hollyhunt.com

**Lightology**  
Louis Poulsen pendant in kitchen  
lightology.com

**Minasian Rug Company**  
Antique rugs throughout  
minasian.com

**Primitive Living + Collecting**  
Various art and accessories  
bepimitive.com

**Richard Norton Gallery**  
Various art throughout  
richardnortongallery.com

**Samuel & Sons**  
Fabrics and trims throughout  
samuelandsons.com

**Tom Stringer Design Partners**  
Custom design of rotunda chairs and  
entry rug, living room chairs and drapery  
tomstringer.com