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To the Touch

Rich color, irresistible texture and a few bold moves transform a classic Wrigleyville greystone.

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Interior Design: Tom Konopiots and Michael Stornello, Vincere, Ltd.
Home Builder: Josue Sabillon, Axios Acquisitions, LLC and Jim Schueller, Bloomfield Development Company, LLC

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s relocations go, moving to a house across the street sounds like a simple proposition. And it might have been for Joseph Brown and Kimberly Deeb—who undertook such a change—had the residence in

question not been a multifamily dwelling inhabited by college undergrads who cared nothing for their 114-year-old greystone's pedigree.

The house was, as designer Michael Stornello puts it, "kind of a mess." The sort that would require all his and partner Tom Konopiots' design skills—along with the help of architect of record Dennis Kulak and builders Josue Sabillon and Jim Schueller—to transform the place into an entertaining hub. "When we first laid eyes on the residence, it was three apartments that were on the small side," Stornello says. "The ceiling heights weren't great, and in the lower level, they were just 6 feet high; it was truly cellar-like."

First, the team needed to reconfigure the multiflat layout into a single-family home that would suit their clients and a constant parade of houseguests. Walls came down, allowing the eye to travel the full length of the main floor—through the foyer, living and dining rooms, kitchen and a new family room addition—to the backyard. The latter, a "dirt patch," Konopiots recalls, was transformed into a two-level outdoor living space that can accommodate 60 friends for cocktails.

The original narrow stairway was jettisoned and a grand new staircase with one continuous handrail was inserted in the bay on the opposite side of the house. "We added skylights up top so, at certain times of day, the sun will flow all the way down to the lower level," Stornello says. "It was a way to bring in light while introducing a sculptural element for the eye to rest upon."

Interior floor heights were also manipulated to achieve taller ceilings, a move that required the careful modification of the existing window openings on the home's limestone façade. "Although we changed the front entry's stairs, railing, canopy and columns—and added a standing-seam metal overhang roof to complement the mix of architecture on the street—it was all done with an eye toward making it look as seamless and original as possible," Konopiots says.

When furnishing the reimagined rooms, however, Konopiots and Stornello sought to strike a balance between old and new. Against the living room's demure abaca wallcovering and beneath crown molding trimmed with studded leather tape is a framed Brendan Murphy painting aswirl with graffiti-like symbols and Day-Glo hues. Next to the artwork is a window wall softened by draperies in a graphic print. "The abstract geometry of the pattern brought an up-to-date feel to the space," Konopiots says.

In the adjacent dining room, the designers granted Joseph and Kimberly's wish for a "statement booth," building a custom banquette against a steel-and-glass partition wall, then pairing the sleek creation with classic shield-back chairs dressed in a shimmering textile. "We liked the play of a traditional form with a more modern fabric," Konopiots says of the seats. "It feels current but not too in the moment."

The kitchen, in turn, gives English country house vibes with its forest-green cabinetry, leather-trimmed brass hardware and countertop of crosscut walnut. Its dual-zone layout, however, which encourages cooks and guests to engage in conversation from opposite sides of the long island, is thoroughly modern. A few steps away in the family room, another contemporary convenience awaits in the form of a large sectional—U-shaped, "because everyone loves to have a corner for that cozy curl-up," Stornello says.

Saturated colors in a spectrum that ranges from earthy to jewel-toned emphasize the sense of comfort in every room: dark petrol on the living room sofa and millwork; burnt sienna on the dining room banquette; cinnamon red on the family room's swivel chairs; deep rust in the basement bar; and soft evergreens on the primary suite's upholstered bed and walls. "There are bouclés, silks, velvets and nubby rugs, which pair so well with jewel tones," Konopiots says. "In the evenings," Stornello adds, "the light bounces off those textures so beautifully. We're touchers, and we both really like the tactile quality of the decor in this house."

Which is why now, when the designers are invited back as guests, "we tend to go around fluffing pillows," Stornello laughs. "It's so convivial, warm and embracing there; it's something we can't help doing." ■



With its terrazzo flooring from The Fine Line and banquette upholstered in a Great Plains fabric by Holly Hunt, the foyer announces the home's mix of historical references and modern finishes. Millwork coated in Crisp Khaki complements walls in Cream Fleece, both by Benjamin Moore.

Details like the Samuel & Sons studded leather trim placed below crown molding painted Benjamin Moore's Notre Dame elevate the living room. Artwork by Brendan Murphy overlooks a Kravet sofa and custom barrel chairs.





Above: Fabricated by Eurocraft, Inc., the dining room banquette features S. Harris velvet on the channel-tufted back. The table is topped with Caesarstone in Vanilla Noir. Light fixtures by The Urban Electric Co. punctuate the ceiling.

Opposite: The shield backs of the Mr. & Mrs. Howard for Sherrill Furniture dining chairs are upholstered in Métaphores fabric while the seats wear an S. Harris textile. The staircase was created by North Shore Stairs.



Above: Custom crosscut walnut countertops by Grothouse define the kitchen's wine area. The Metropolitan Woodworking-fabricated base and upper cabinets are painted Benjamin Moore's Waller Green and Parish White, respectively, and adorned with Waterworks hardware.

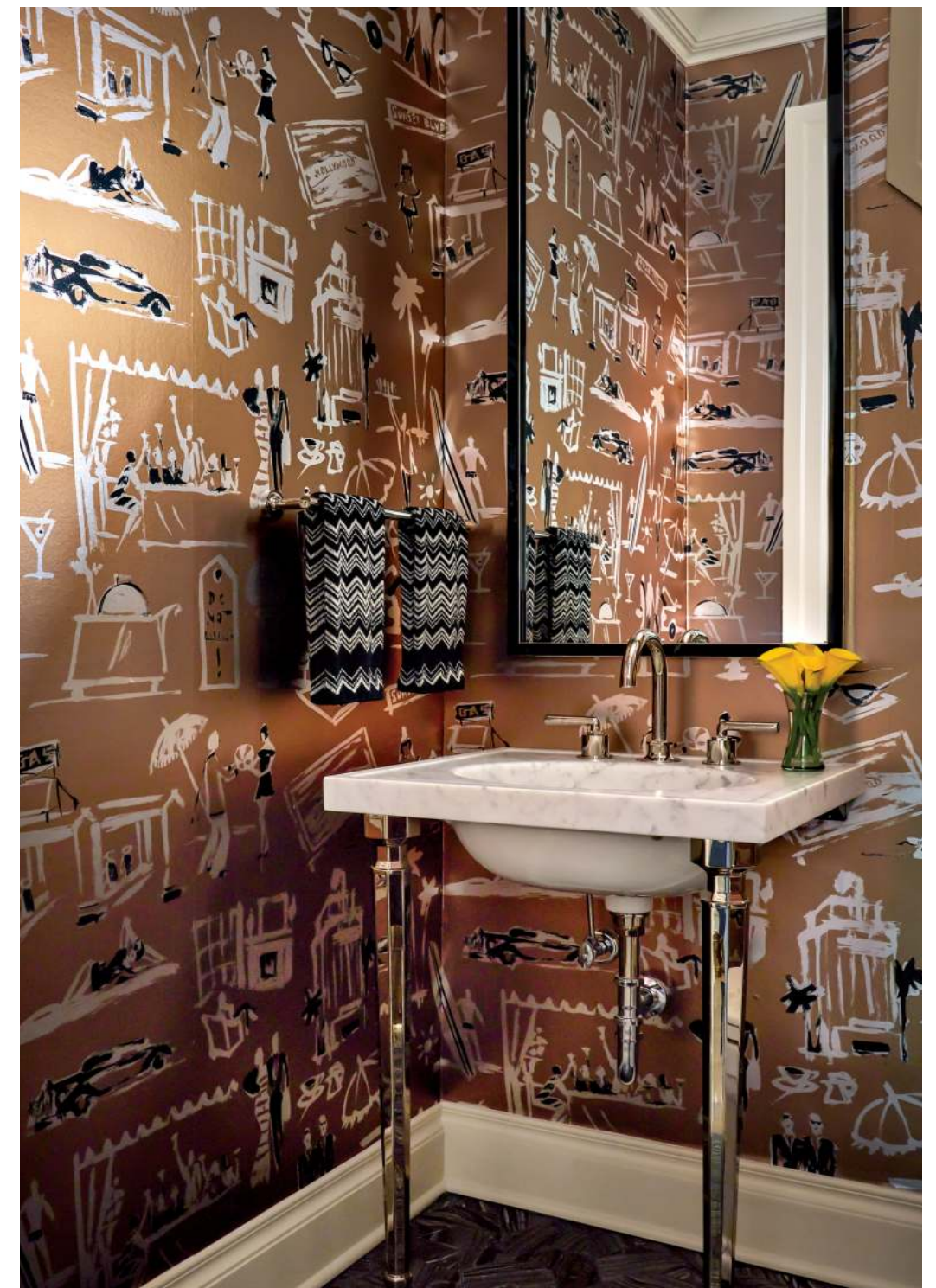
Opposite: Alternating Nero Marquina and Calacatta Bluette marble floor tiles from The Fine Line make a bold statement in the lower-level bar. The cabinetry is coated in Benjamin Moore's Nicolson Red and features a back-painted glass backsplash by Meva Glass.





Above: The daughter's bathroom is a study in pink and white, with Caesarstone's Pure White quartz countertops, walls in Benjamin Moore's Pompeii and marble mosaic floors from The Fine Line. A Visual Comfort & Co. sconce and a decorative Mirror Home mirror add shimmer.

Opposite: Westfall & Kitson wallpaper and a rose-colored RH bed complement a quilt made for the daughter by her grandmother. Flanked by Taffard Fabric drapes with Samuel & Sons trim, a Visual Comfort & Co. chandelier and West Elm chair continue the pink theme.



Above: The powder room's custom wallcovering by Donald Robertson is a licensed version of the pattern used at The Tower Bar and Restaurant at West Hollywood's Sunset Tower Hotel. A Kohler washstand pairs a Carrara marble top with polished nickel legs.

Left: In the primary bedroom, a Century Furniture bed floats in a sea of greens, from the seaweed-hued Phillip Jeffries wallcovering to the jade Lee Jofa window treatments to the forest-green rug from Oscar Isberian Rugs. The John Vincent Lorence artwork above the bed is complemented by a George Cohen piece.