

# RUE

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EXCLUSIVE

At Home  
With **KERRY  
WASHINGTON**

ULTIMATE  
KITCHENS,  
BEDROOMS  
& BATHS

**Rising Up:**  
The Hottest Designers  
with the Best Ideas

**The Magic Mix:**  
How to Layer  
Like a Pro

**An Insider's Guide to**  
Furniture, Lighting,  
Rugs & Paint

## PRO TIPS

### home highlights

# FULL CIRCLE

The team at Studio Gild help a new client—and former employee—make bold moves as they moved from a condo to their first house.

INTERIOR DESIGN BY STUDIO GILD  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RYAN MCDONALD  
STYLING BY PAIGE WASSEL

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The living room was previously cold, white, and shiny. “It’s the first room one sees upon entering the home, so we really wanted to create an inviting ‘wow’ moment,” Kristen Ekland says. “We replaced the mantel with a custom-designed, curvaceous fireplace in a stunning Breccia Viola marble.” The marble’s veining inspired the wall color: Farrow & Ball Dead Salmon. The sconces are Lawson-Fenning, the floor lamp is Gubi, and the plaster art is by Atelier Plateau. A vase by Caroline Blackburn sits atop the vintage coffee table.

Kristen Ekland, one of the principal designers at Chicago’s Studio Gild, knew her client long before this project. “The client used to be an intern/project coordinator/jack-of-all-trades at Studio Gild,” Kristen shares. With her husband and kids, she had moved from a condo into this house in the Southport Corridor. “They wanted a little edge—but still comfortable for young kids—and to have a mix of high and low,” the designer says. Though it was the homeowners’ first investment in furnishings and art, and their first time working with a design firm, they knew it was the only

way to achieve their design goals.

“Studio Gild exposed me to the world of design and treated me like a part of the team from day one,” the client explains. “I knew Studio Gild understood how to work with clients, and there was absolutely no way I could have done this by myself—it was a total gut!” With two young daughters and a third child on the way, they wanted their home to be a comfortable retreat from the urban setting beyond, which meant adding warmth and accessibility.

“The house was early-2000s glitz with crystal, mirrors, shiny marble, heavy wood details, a cool gray palette, and lots of iron work,”





Kristen says, also citing scale as one of the big issues. “The fireplace mantels were too tall and not human scale, and the wainscoting and trim package was excessive. We needed to peel back much of the traditional ornamentation to make a home that aligned with the clients’ contemporary taste.”

What was meant to be a six-month renovation turned into a year. “When the project began and we dug deeper into the details of the home, it became apparent that the house would better support the lifestyle of our client if we made some bolder moves to the existing floor plan,” Kristen shares. Luckily, it came down to trust. “The homeowner knew Studio Gild’s aesthetic and how we worked and had seen more behind the scenes than any friend, relative, or partner of the firm. That made the relationship really unique,” Kristen explains.

For furnishings, Studio Gild turned to natural colors and organic furniture shapes, which resulted in a lot of kid-friendly rounded corners in the home. They also utilized plaster to give texture and depth and added accent walls to create dramatic

↑ Studio Gild removed the dated stone flooring, a wall of beveled mirrors, wainscoting, greige wallpaper, and an overly ornate stair railing (layered in a zebra-print stair runner!) to make way for the new. A wall-to-wall walnut console, Oscar Isberian vintage Turkish rug, and ceramics from Anne Agma and Yonobi Studio offer a preview of the design to come in the rest of the house. The Croft House mirror intentionally mimics the archway of the front door. The wall paint is Benjamin Moore Cloud White.

↗ The library was originally quite dark and somber because every surface was brown. “We wanted a moody space, but with some actual color,” Kristen says. Lighter oak wood was introduced in the flooring and millwork, and a plaster mantel proportionate to the room size was built. Benjamin Moore Blue Note was selected to bring a sense of serenity to the room. The chair is Patricia Urquiola and the rug is vintage.

→ “This powder room’s heyday was in 2000 and it was in desperate need of a makeover,” the designer recalls. “The shimmering mica wallcovering and Carrara marble floors, countertop, and wainscot needed to go.” The vanity and faucet were salvaged, but the vanity top was replaced with a dynamic White Explosion quartzite. The walls are plastered in Portola Paints’ Lone Park.

moments. They got the edge they craved, with a dose of comfort. “We were in awe of how everything we had seen on paper and in presentations for months had transformed so beautifully into real life,” the homeowner says.

