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INTERIOR DESIGN / TOM KONOIPTS  
AND MICHAEL STORNELLO, VINCERE, LTD.  
HOME BUILDER / JIM SCHUELLER, BLOOMFIELD  
DEVELOPMENT COMPANY, LLC



# CREATIVE INTERLUDE

FOR AN ARTISTIC FAMILY IN WICKER PARK, A RENOVATED HISTORIC RESIDENCE MEETS THEIR ENTERTAINING NEEDS.

WRITTEN BY MINDY PANTIEL / PHOTOGRAPHY BY NATHAN KIRKMAN



**Opposite:** An A. Rudin settee upholstered in a Holland & Sherry wool-flannel provides seating for family music recitals in the parlor of a Wicker Park residence. Also the site of game nights, the space includes an antique Victorian chess table from London's Thomas Crabb Antiques for friendly competitions. The armchair by Vincere, Ltd. wears Great Plains fabric by Holly Hunt, and the wool-and-linen rug with a leather border is by J. D. Staron.

**Below:** In the living room, designers Tom Konopiots and Michael Stornello created a space where the homeowners could entertain formally as well as casually relax. The custom sofa designed by Vincere, Ltd. and fabricated by EuroCraft is covered in Giant linen purchased at Holly Hunt. The armchairs are by Gérard for Dessin Fournir, and the iron-and-glass coffee table is from Paul Ferrante.



**M**ark Yee and his partner have a passion for entertaining. So it seems only right that their 1887 Victorian in Wicker Park is nestled along Beer Baron Row, where parties have long been part of the neighborhood's history. This landmark district houses mansions once owned by Chicago's wealthiest brewers and public figures—such as the Yee home's previous owner, William H. Thompson, the city's last Republican mayor, who held the office in two separate terms—from 1915 to 1923 and then again from 1927 to 1931. The new residents, who have three children, aren't ones to buck history, which is why a music-and-game room was a primary directive to their designers and longtime friends, Tom Konopiots and Michael Stornello. "Mark and all three children love to play the piano, and he and his partner are consummate entertainers," Konopiots says. "So we knew it was important to balance their desire to throw formal parties with the functions of day-to-day family life."

With two parlors and a self-contained dining room, the existing layout handily fulfilled the formal side of the equation, although renovations perfected the residence for the clients' needs. The height of the cased opening was raised and enlarged so the twin parlors would read as one room and make way for a baby grand piano in what would become the music-and-game space. While an expansive addition to the back of the home would address casual-living requirements, maintaining the traditional elements in the original part of the residence that defined the historic architecture was a major consideration. "Much of the old millwork was in disrepair and needed to be stripped out," Konopiots says. "But we used the existing casings and rosettes as reference points and replicated new trim to be consistent with the vintage of the house."

Marble fireplaces in the living room and master bedroom as well as inlaid oak floors were among the home's other noteworthy features, but not all the flooring was salvageable.



“We retained the inlays from the foyer, matched the oak for the rest of the house and stained everything the same dark color so it all looks original,” Stornello explains, noting he and Konopiots relied on general contractor Jim Schueller to source the wood and ensure perfect integration.

When it came time to expand the floor plan to accommodate the new addition—an open kitchen and family room on the main level, a library/office above it and a child’s room and play area on the third floor—Schueller found the right brick to ease the transition from old to new. “We sourced a Chicago common brick that even the landmarks department was pleased with,” he says. “The proper implementation of the back addition had a major impact on the overall look and success of the project.”

With construction well underway, the designers began the process of outfitting the rooms. “Stylistically, the Yee family wanted a home that felt collected, with a mix of new, vintage and antique pieces,” Konopiots says. A reproduction rug

defined by camel-colored and muted brick tones in the living room kicked things off by establishing the warm neutrals for the overall palette. In deference to the collected concept, the antique character of the floor covering is juxtaposed with a set of modern club chairs and a forged iron-and-glass coffee table. Contemporary paintings by Andrew Holmquist hang above antique reproduction mahogany chests that flank the fireplace to complete the balancing act.

Next to the space, the music room is outfitted with an upholstered settee to provide seating for family recitals as well as an antique Victorian chess table for family game nights. The latter holds the chess set Mark used as a boy when he learned to play the game—which, in turn, he now uses to teach his own children.

Because Mark is a professional artist—he paints at Hubbard Street Studios—not surprisingly, many of the major art pieces throughout the home are his. “The house is fairly formal, but the art is organic enough to fit anywhere,” says

A Yamaha baby grand with a black satin finish from Grand Piano Haus dominates the music room. The Vincere, Ltd. ottoman fabricated by EuroCraft sports Clarence House fabric and a Samuel & Sons leather edge trim. In the dining room beyond, an abstract painting by homeowner and artist Mark Yee brings a contemporary element to the traditional space.



The setting for formal dinner parties features a Bausman & Company ebonized inlaid table from deAurora; the Pedworth dining chairs by Minton-Spidell—upholstered with Fortuny mohair and Egyptian cotton—are from Michael-Cleary. The French rubbed-steel light fixture is by McLain Wiesand, and the midcentury lacquered Aldo Tura bar cart is from Umbrella in Hopewell, New Jersey.



In the open kitchen, the custom cabinets are painted off-white, the counters are durable Caesarstone, the brass lanterns are by Remains Lighting, and the barstools are from RH. Come mealtime, the family gathers around a 19<sup>th</sup>-century oak table, also from RH, and relaxes on Vincere, Ltd. seating wearing a washable Perennials stripe fabric.

In a child's bedroom, RH's Emelia panel bed is flanked by nightstands from RH and Bungalow 5's blue-glass Gabriella mirrors. The table lamps are by Aerin for Circa Lighting, and the wool micro-hooked rug is by Dash & Albert.



RH's Ariane storage desk is the perfect spot for finishing homework assignments in a bedroom. The Clemente table lamp is by Aerin for Circa Lighting; the desk chair is from CB2.



**Opposite:** Wooden Image fabricated a pair of marble-topped vanities in the master bathroom. The cabinets tout polished-nickel faucets from Waterworks and RH's Hanson pulls. Also from RH, the English aged-nickel mirror is flanked by Circa Lighting sconces.

**Below:** An original marble fireplace warms the master bedroom, where Century Furniture's Dauphine bed is upholstered with Holly Hunt's Great Plains fabric; next to it is Circa Lighting's Burt black-marble table lamp. A Christian Liaigre chaise from the homeowners' collection rests next to a round Andalusia Collection table from Century Furniture; the pair of black-and-white framed photographs is from the Trowbridge Gallery in Atlanta.



the artist, who characterizes his work as abstract but warm. For example, the neutral hues of his painting in the dining room seem to melt into the hand-painted wallcovering while complementing the Italian reproduction chairs dressed in luscious Fortuny mohair. Elsewhere in the room, the rectangular wood table provides a modern interjection, and the subtle floral pattern on the draperies has historic overtones. "It references an earlier pattern but with a modern scale," Stornello says.

Things lighten and brighten in the kitchen and family room, where all family members participate in meal prep and routinely sit down to dinner together. The designers ran striped fabric on the dining chairs horizontally for a playful look that serves as a reminder that children live

here. "We really love fabric and like to integrate textiles as much as possible," Konopiots says.

That love of the tactile continues in the master suite, which boasts a natural jute-and-silver-leaf wallcovering. "The metallic is very subtle, but it adds a touch of glamour and creates depth," Stornello says. More texture is found in the tailored space in the wool-and-silk-blend bed cover and in a carved wool rug with a leather border.

Despite the home's mindful curation and sophistication, at the end of the day it is a place where children skateboard in the yard and their artwork is proudly displayed on the walls. But above all, it is a space that embraces creativity. "Music is what brings us all together," Mark explains, "and this is a home that encourages art, music and self-expression." ■