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# CULTURAL EXCHANGE

WITH THEIR CHILDREN OFF TO COLLEGE, A COUPLE TRADES THE SUBURBS FOR CITY LIFE IN A LINCOLN PARK TOWNHOME.

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AND MICHAEL STORNELLO, VINCERE LTD.  
HOME BUILDER / JIM SCHUELLER, BLOOMFIELD DEVELOPMENT, LLC  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / DAN WANZUNG, AMERICAN GARDENS, INC.

“THE GOAL WAS TO MAKE THE INTERIORS SOPHISTICATED BUT COMFORTABLE, LIKE A LONDON TOWNHOUSE.”

—MICHAEL STORNELLO

It may have been an empty nest that prompted a husband and wife to downsize from their Oak Park home to a tailored Lincoln Park townhouse, but by no means is it an empty house. In fact, theirs is a rather full one that cleverly uses every inch of its narrow urban lot. “They wanted a traditional envelope but not necessarily a traditional lifestyle,” explains Tom Konopiots, who, with partner Michael Stornello, was hired to realize the couple’s vision. “The move to the city has invigorated us,” says the wife. “Who I am today is different from who I was when we had little kids. We see plays every week—do things we didn’t do before—and this house is a gathering point.”

Among the couple’s requests were en suite bedrooms and a lounge for their three daughters who are away at school but return home frequently, as well as a guest suite, entertaining spaces, a home office, a rooftop meditation room and a lower level complete with a gym, a media room and a bedroom for the wife’s 83-year-old father. There’s even an artificial-turf dog run for the family’s four-legged members. “That’s a lot of functionality on a 24-by-119-foot lot,” says Stornello. “It was a real Rubik’s cube!” A five-story plan was sketched out that ticked all the owners’ boxes and, critically, the boxes of the zoning board; it was finalized with the help of architect Michael Cox of MC & Associates. “This is an old neighborhood with homes of stature and size, so we kept a similar height and made the home look as if it could be older than it is,” explains Konopiots.

The designers placed a priority on understanding the family’s needs, eschewing shopping trips in favor of what they call “listening tours,” taking their clients through showrooms and simply observing what they responded to. “The goal was to make the interiors sophisticated but

comfortable, like a London townhouse,” says Stornello. “It’s a challenge to build a large home on a narrow lot, but the layout provided all the rooms one would want,” says builder Jim Schueller. “The house feels warm and inviting.”

The main floor is devoted to the public areas, beginning with the living room. “The jumping-off point was the rug,” says Konopiots about the custom-made Khotan sage-and-salmon rug that influenced the shades chosen for the paneling as well as for bolder pieces like the green velvet sofa, which is paired with sculptural armchairs. “They float in the room and are visible from the dining room, so a great profile was important,” says Stornello.

In the dining room, the designers installed the first of several of the owners’ important Indian works. One 300-pound frieze required a reinforced floor and a custom-built cabinet to support it. A round table was selected to encourage conversation at dinner parties. To that end, a well-designed kitchen was crucial, so a casual eating area and a desk were incorporated, melding functionality with efficiency. Behind the kitchen is a family room and, beyond that, a courtyard and a conservatory. “You just don’t see glass-and-iron conservatories anymore,” remarks Schueller of the custom build. “It’s simply stunning.”

Benefiting the rear space is the garage’s green roof. A requirement by the city, it also gave landscape architect Dan Wanzung the chance to loosen the formality of the boxwood plantings at the façade. The garden is overlooked by the master bedroom, so Wanzung chose to plant herbaceous perennials and soft grasses. “It gets full sun,” he says, “so that was also an opportunity to add some color.” Those garden views bring a restful element to the master, which occupies the back of the second floor. “There were two goals for the master: create an elegant simplicity and incorporate an heirloom tapestry,” says Konopiots. “It’s both modern and antique—a dialogue across time.” The monochromatic palette continues in the bathroom, where a tub that took eight men to carry is sited like a sculpture. “Walls sheathed in marble up the luxury ante,” Konopiots notes.

Crowning the home are outdoor entertaining spaces and a meditation room. “It’s my beautiful quiet space overlooking the city,” says the wife of the meditation room/rooftop garden. There, multiple lounge areas were created as well as a dining space that’s perfect for summertime when the girls are home from school. “It’s gratifying to see the family living in the house,” says Stornello. The couple, too, is grateful, and their relationship with the designers has blossomed. “Tom and Mike are dear friends now,” says the wife, adding, “but they still run around the house and fluff the pillows when they’re over.” ■



Designers Tom Konopiots and Michael Stornello wanted the foyer of this Lincoln Park townhouse to announce the high level of design throughout the home. Lit by sconces and an alabaster pendant from Visual Comfort, a painting by Ramesh Gorjala is a nod to the homeowners’ Indian heritage. The flooring is from Artistic Tile.



A custom velvet sofa fabricated by Eurocraft Inc. and upholstered in a dark green Donghia fabric anchors the living room. To better see the hand-knotted Khotan-style rug from Matt Camron Rugs & Tapestries, the designers chose a glass-topped coffee table from Paul Ferrante. The wool flannel draperies are from Holland & Sherry and feature Samuel & Sons trim.

Above the living room's custom fireplace fabricated by Wooden Image hangs a Michael S. Smith mirror from Mirror Image Home in Los Angeles. Flanking it are recent works by Rina Banerjee from EAB Fine Art Services. The consoles and Klismos stool are from Jamb in London. The Rose Tarlow armchairs from Holly Hunt are upholstered in Clarence House fabric.





**Left:** In the study, Konopiots and Stornello paired a Bunny Williams Home desk from Lee Jofa with an A. Rudin chair. The Ralph Lauren desk lamp and bookcase lights are from Visual Comfort, where the designers also sourced the pendant fixture. The Radici rug is from Oscar Isberian Rugs. Wooden Image crafted the home's millwork.

**Opposite:** The dining room features a Victoria Hagan table from Holland & Sherry surrounded by Kravet-upholstered chairs from The Bright Group. The Niemann Weeks chandelier is from Visual Comfort.



The conservatory, designed by Konopiots and Stornello and executed by Town & Country Conservatories, provides an enclosed passage from the house to the garage and is papered with a playful garden motif from Pierre Frey. The outdoor patio is furnished with RH dining and coffee tables along with a sofa and chairs from Summer Classics.

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—TOM KONOPIOTS



**Above:** A stainless-steel-and-ceramic tub from Penhaglon anchors the master bathroom. The walls are lined with marble from Terrazzo & Marble Supply, and the flooring and decorative tiles are from The Fine Line.

**Left:** An antique beaded South Asian tapestry hangs between Bunny Williams mirrors above the Ralph Lauren bed, which is upholstered in Coraggio fabric. The Century Furniture nightstands hold Visual Comfort lamps. Joining the Kravet sofa is a custom ottoman upholstered in Mokum fabric from Holly Hunt.

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