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SPECTACULAR FAMILY-FRIENDLY DESIGN
BY TRACY HICKMAN & DSPACE STUDIO

SUMMER THORNTON BRINGS A HISTORIC
VICTORIAN BACK TO ITS GLORY

UP CLOSE & PERSONAL WITH ARCHITECT
JOHN RONAN & GALLERIST MONIQUE MELOCHE

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SUMMER/FALL 2016 \$5.95



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MODERN PASTELS

The living room by the front entrance creates a stunning first impression. The mirror above the mantel is custom by Aaron Bladon and features antiqued glass with rounded brass corners. "It is minimal at first glance, but the attention to detail in it is really special," says designer Jenny Holladay. The sconces flanking it were found through Kirby Antiques on 1stdibs.

BACK TO GLAMOUR

A dilapidated house in Wicker Park that inspires love at first sight is brought back to its original grandeur—with a modern twist—by Summer Thornton Design.

By Andrea Mills

Photography by Tony Soluri

"Ali always loved this house," says John Lynch of the historical Victorian home originally built in 1885 in Wicker Park that he and his wife, Ali, bought three years ago. Coincidentally, designer Summer Thornton also loved this house after seeing it during an estate sale—"I didn't get anything at the sale, but I couldn't stop thinking about the house. It was horrible but magnificent." In a serendipitous twist of fate, when the Lynches were nearing completion of the gut renovation by Rugo / Raff Ltd. Architects, they discovered Thornton's work online and knew she would be the designer they could trust to finish the job. Being busy with two full-time jobs and two young toddlers, "by the time we picked our heads up and realized we needed to hire a designer, we were just a few months away from moving in," admits John. They needed someone who could work swiftly and push them beyond their comfort zone to achieve the traditional bones with a contemporary interior they were after. "I was just so excited to bring this house back to its former glory. I knew it was such a beautiful wreck when they found it," says Thornton.

Working with designer Jenny Holladay, the duo had a fresh start when it came to choosing furnishings, since the Lynches only had furniture for the basement, which they had brought from John's condo. They started by establishing a color palette



MAIN ANCHOR

From above: The custom kitchen by Rugo / Raff Ltd. Architects mixes traditional elements, like an enclosed range hood and crown molding with modern appliances, hardwood floors, and Statuary marble backsplash and countertops; the front foyer features a modern graphic wallpaper from Schumacher that continues upstairs, paired with an antique Murano glass chandelier.

and choosing lighting. “It adds all the charm and character to a room,” explains Thornton. The living room was the starting point and established the ethereal vibe: “It faces north and doesn’t have a whole lot of light, so we wanted to give it a misty tone with pale blues, lilac and a silvery finish,” she says. The same color scheme was used in the family room off the open kitchen but in punched-up tones. As Jenny explains, John was careful to preserve the historical elements of the home; it was apparently originally owned by a ship captain so subtle nods to a nautical theme are referenced in the deeper blues, the chandelier made of rope, the lanterns flanking the banquette and the ship art. Double French doors flow to the outdoor space that features an Old World-inspired indoor-outdoor fireplace.

The kitchen, custom-designed by Rugo / Raff Ltd. Architects, features plenty of storage space in the cabinetry and built-ins on either side—one of which doubles as a china cabinet and wet bar, which gets plenty of use with the couple’s frequent entertaining and hosting family from out of the country. Where they did opt for more drama is in the formal dining room—it provided the opportunity to go bold with color, and the cerulean-blue walls and silvery wallpapered ceiling make for a gorgeous conversation-starter. Ali found the chandelier to which Thornton and Holladay added an oval dining table from Hickory Chair and custom demilune consoles that mirror the symmetry of the windows. “A dining room layout with lots of windows and light isn’t typical in Chicago, but it allowed us to go with such a bold blue,” says Thornton. “It’s my favorite room in the house. I love the color and the mirrors across from the windows that bounce light around and the ceiling that makes it sparkly,” she adds.



FINE DINING
In the breakfast area adjacent to the living room they opted for freestanding leather seating instead of a built-in banquette, which creates a sophisticated yet family-friendly spot where the kids eat. The art and rope chandelier are subtle nods to the home’s history as a ship captain’s abode.



FAMILY STYLE
The family room continues the blue, purple and gray color theme from the formal living room, but in more vibrant tones that reflect their use as a high-traffic zone by the kids and dog. An indoor-outdoor fireplace and French doors connect it with the outdoor space, which features complementary navy furniture.

DESIGN DETAILS

TYPE
Single-family home

LOCATION
Wicker Park

ARCHITECTURE
Steve Rugo,
Rugo / Raff Ltd. Architects
rugoraff.com

DESIGN
Summer Thornton
and Jenny Holladay,
Summer Thornton Design
summerthorntondesign.com

BUILDER
G. Corp Development
gcorpdevelopment.com

RESOURCES
Circa Lighting
Living room sconces
(by window) and floor lamp
circalighting.com

Eli-Wyn Upholstery
Custom upholstery
eli-wyn.com

Hickory Chair
Dining room table and chairs
hickorychair.com

Holly Hunt
Wallpaper in powder room, fabric
on throw pillows
hollyhunt.com

Jayson Home
Family room table, chair,
baskets, throw pillows, art and tray
jaysonhome.com

Jonathan Adler
Family room accessories
jonathanadler.com

Made Goods
Living room side table
madedegoods.com

Redefined Decor
Living room accessories
redefineddecor.com

Restoration Hardware
Mirrors in dining room, bedding
rh.com

Stark
Hallway runner, living room rug,
master bedroom rug
starkcarpet.com

The Urban Electric Co.
Dining room sconces
urbanelectricco.com



SILVER LINING
A small powder room off the kitchen is like a pretty jewel box thanks to Pierre Frey's floral wallpaper, Tarantelle, and a Carl Fagerlund scone found at Chris Howard Antiques & Modern through 1stdibs.

The deft mixing of modern and traditional elements is also seen in the moldings added throughout, and in the graphic wallpaper in the entry and upstairs hallway. "A large run of hallway can turn into a dead space, so we wanted something interesting to connect it," explains Thornton. The tone-on-tone reads as a neutral but adds interest, and highlights the tall ceilings and curved walls that make the typically pedestrian space really pretty.

Ali and John both work in finance with incredibly demanding schedules, so a bedroom that felt like a calming retreat at the end of the day was high on their list. Thornton and Holladay opted for shimmering neutrals and minimal furnishings to make it feel like a five-star hotel suite. "I like using wallpaper in a bedroom because it helps with sound insulation, feels cozier and makes it more interesting," says Thornton of the grass cloth that has a slight sheen to bounce light around the room. Leading to a large walk-in closet and en suite that has a tree-filled view of Wicker Park, it is one of Ali's favorite parts of the house. "I wake up at 5AM for work, and it's really nice to walk in there and turn on the fireplace and floor heaters. It makes my mornings a little easier," she says.

In fact, the whole house is designed to make their lives smoother, and they couldn't be happier with the transformation. As John explains, "It feels like we restored a work of art in a way, and helped beautify the neighborhood in the process." Anyone that knows the neighborhood would wholeheartedly agree. ■

SERENITY NOW
The goal of the master bedroom design was to make you feel calm as soon as you walked in. A monochromatic palette of soothing neutrals was chosen, along with a grass-cloth wallcovering with a slight sheen that bounces natural light around. French side tables from the 1960s are mixed with modern pieces like the mirror, bench and custom headboard.

