

# CLASSY CANVAS

One North Shore estate is the epitome of a fine art gallery blended with architectural and interior design artistry.

By Katie Anne Orr

On any given day, you might walk into this Winnetka estate and hear the hypnotic beats of Enigma pulsating overhead; or the wooden, organic sounds of the African plains; or something akin to *The Phantom of the Opera* meets *Miami Vice*. It depends on the mood. Flowing throughout the central speakers of the residence, the music is as eclectic as the art peering at you from every angle. To the left, you'll see Andy Warhol; to the right, Lester Johnson. A veritable art museum, this home is a force to be reckoned with—in the most stunning sense.

When the husband-and-wife homeowners, business owners with three children and two dogs, decided to reconstruct and redesign it in 2013, after 20 years of life and laughter, it was with two primary intentions: to showcase the world-class art collection and transform the home into the perfect space for gathering and entertaining. They wanted a home that mirrored their creative, gregarious nature. So when they chose Airoom (airoom.com) for the project, it was a natural fit. With its ample assembly of skilled designers, architects, builders and engineers—each with its own signature style—it catered perfectly to clients with such extensive tastes. “They wanted a design that would last the test of time. Something elegant and modern with a French art deco feel,” says Airoom’s lead designer, Gina Bon.

As any artist might consider a blank canvas before raising a paintbrush, Bon stood back and contemplated how to best utilize the architecture. The original first-floor design contained the office, billiards room and media room in the left wing. The right wing contained the kitchen, breakfast room and formal dining area. “There was an awkward transitional

**ABSTRACT CONCEPT**  
Colorful Keith Haring originals, Asian antiques and zany patterns create fun—and a juxtaposition of contemporary and traditional styles—in the formal living room.











**SMOKE & MIRRORS**  
From top: Delightfully  
deceiving, the islands,  
armoires and millwork  
manage to hide an  
entire kitchen of  
essentials in their folds;  
an additional sink area  
lets guests mix cocktails  
off the main kitchen.



space off the foyer, leading to the formal dining room, which didn't get used often. And the kids were always watching TV in the media room, so when [the wife] was baking in the kitchen, they were segregated from one another," she says. Under the tutelage of field superintendent Kevin Bigos, the team undertook a major reconfiguration of the space. They moved all formal rooms to the left, and all informal rooms to the right, facilitating family togetherness. To enlarge





the kitchen, they borrowed some square footage that previously belonged to a downstairs bedroom. Meanwhile, the upstairs master suite received a dazzling makeover—a remarkable feat in its own right—by designer Pam Morris.

With the new layout complete, Bon mentally placed the artwork and polished up the framework with eye-catching design details. To capture the French flair desired, her team input raised-grain



wood flooring with chevron and herringbone patterns—quintessentially Parisian. For contrast, they added handsome dark-wood millwork in the form of architectural columns. In the billiards room, a wood veneer wall “gives an appropriately darker, moodier feel,” says Bon. An oversize astronaut Warhol painting hangs opposite a Jessye Norman image constructed entirely out of caviar bits. The neighboring dining room dons an olive-green leather wall, which highlights a soporific piece by Bill Jacklin. While the fenestration remained the same, the walls surrounding the windows were covered with a gray, high-gloss sheen for a fresh, updated look. Bon favored custom Airoom designs for several of the furnishings.

But unparalleled innovation is found in the kitchen—designed to be a gathering space where the homeowners also happen to cook. “It was previously wood-heavy, with lots of upper cabinets and elaborate crown molding. We wanted to swap the ornate for a simpler design and clean lines,” says Bon. “We wanted to make it feel light and bright and airy.” The genius of this space is found in every trim, utensil, pocket door and hidden compartment. The team actually removed all wall cabinetry to create more space for art and found clever ways to create storage: a spice rack hidden

**HIS AND HIS**  
Even the “his”  
bathroom is a work  
of art, with its  
softened edges and  
blue-gray glam.





#### DECO-RATED

From top: Pam Morris' bedroom design is fit for a king (of the jungle)—somnolent but slightly fierce; a Warhol piece pops against a dark-wood veneer wall and heavy drapes in the billiards room. Opposite page: Colorful artworks in the dining room are balanced by chevron-patterned wooden elements for a French art deco feel.

inside a column near the stove and glasses tucked away behind a wall panel. What appears to be a series of white cabinetry is actually a disguised dishwasher, and the refrigerator resembles an armoire. "People still think the kitchen has to yell at you, 'I'm the kitchen!'" when you walk in. But Gina and the whole team got it right. You probably wouldn't even know it's a kitchen without the cooking range," says the husband. Novel products by Kohler, Kallista, Wolf and Miele help create magic in the space, while a fireplace keeps things cozy near the entryway.

Itself a work of art, the kitchen is in good company, surrounded by so many of the greats: Keith Haring, Robert Mapplethorpe and Tom Wesselmann among them. "Cookie-cutter isn't really us," says the wife. "Art is an expression of how people see the world in different ways. You shouldn't be afraid to blend." The Airoom team configured a special gallery wall in the nearby media room for a 9-by-10 Gérard Garouste original passed down by the husband's mother, an art collector herself. She also passed down a collection of original 1920s and '30s René Lalique vases, displayed on glass shelves specially lit by the team.

One of the most cherished art pieces hangs in the



breakfast room: a Mark Tansey original, composed entirely of one hue of blue. "What I appreciate about art is the abstract thinking—figuring out where the artist started and how they arrived at that," says the husband. "I'll never understand how Tansey gets so much detail out of one color. I couldn't get that much detail out of a hundred colors. I wish my brain worked like that. Seems like a fun way to live." ■





"THEY WANTED A DESIGN THAT WOULD LAST THE TEST OF TIME," SAYS GINA BON. "SOMETHING WITH A FRENCH ART DECO FEEL."

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## DESIGN DETAILS

HOME TYPE  
**Single-Family Home**

LOCATION  
**Winnetka**

INTERIOR & ARCHITECTURAL  
DESIGN

**Airoom**  
(Designers Gina Bon, Pam  
Morris and Kevin Bigos)

RESOURCES  
**Hansgrohe**  
Fixtures in bathrooms

**Kallista**  
Quincy faucets for main sink  
and bar sink in kitchen

**Kohler**  
Stages sink with walnut cutting  
board on island in kitchen

**Miele**  
Dishwashers and built-in  
coffeemaker in kitchen

**Sub-Zero**  
Fridge, icemaker and wine  
fridge in kitchen

**Wolf**  
Gas range top with double  
griddle, induction cooktop  
module, steam oven, two  
single ovens and microwave  
drawer in kitchen

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