



FRESH FRENCH Clockwise from top: A Lucite table brings a hint of glamour to the entryway's antique ambience; the salon wall's mingled frames and images create a sense of *je ne sais quoi*; and Young's mixed attire mirrors the contemporary-meets-midcentury motif of the living room.



YOUNG BLOOD

The debut of a youthful new tastemaker in interior design portrays old-soul sophistication.

By Katie Orr | Photography by Daniel Kelleghan

Stephen Young's 24 years of age belie his design aesthetic, clear knowledge of architecture, construction and furnishings, and the way he ruminates on them. You'd swear he's a veteran with an impossibly fresh face. In truth, Young just completed his first solo full-scale project: a renovation of a Gold Coast city retreat for a couple who lives in the northwest suburbs. His goal for the mid-rise residence was to create classical elegance

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...CONTINUED influenced by midcentury modern and French design, mingled with some whimsical flair.

Essentially starting with a blank slate, Young did everything from the technical drawings, construction management, custom finishes and fabrications down to the very last decorative detail. Working with the limitations of the space, he opened up the architecture to let the small, urban unit breathe. He custom-designed most of the furniture, millwork and cabinetry—complete with ebony in the beading—and stained the wooden floors a new hue. All of the crown moldings, baseboards and applied moldings were brush-painted with a high-gloss oil base to richen the experience when light hits it. “I utilized lots of value engineering here: High design at an affordable price point was the goal,” he says.

Young’s philosophy: Curate, don’t purchase. Allow furnishings to lead a space, and let it absorb their years of experience. Fill your home with investments, not goods. “I wanted to create a collection that represents how the clients have really lived—what they’ve taken from the world and brought home—because it creates an intimate experience,” he says. It’s a philosophy embraced by Doug Nickless, Young’s mentor and collaborator on the project. “To me, good design, quality design, the integrity of design, is not down the drain. It’s been CONTINUED...

MOODY HUES Clockwise from above: A tufted leather chesterfield sofa and antique sunburst shed light on the study’s personality; an antique giltwood mirror reflects the glass mosaic tile of the master bathroom; and reverse edges on the kitchen’s millwork and a marble apron countertop prove that opposition can create beautiful symmetry.





IN TRANSITION From left: A Sputnik lamp and vertical mirror create splashes of elegance in the master bathroom; fabrics by Kravet and Organic Looms pay a nod to classic French elements within the partially contemporary master bedroom.



...CONTINUED swallowed up by this vortex of HGTV,” says Nickless. “Stephen thinks outside the box. He does his research; he finds great pieces. It makes me feel like there’s hope for the next generation of designers.” Kitchen display shelves are inhabited by two dozen decanters that Young sourced from antique shops. A 19th century Chinese calligraphy table acts as the coffee table. An antique Louis Vuitton trunk from Wright auction house anchors the study. Asian and African artifacts, including some ancient spearheads, were provided by OBJECT Steve Quinlan.

In the living room, Young created an eye-catching, Parisian-inspired salon wall of art—a dynamic jumble of mismatched

frames and images, all sourced locally in Chicago. Most interesting, however, is the piece adjacent: a contemporary work of deep magenta paint, it’s actually a piece of plywood that Young found in an alleyway, lacquered and hung on the wall. “[It] just comes alive in the room,” says the wife and homeowner. “Some of the art is extremely unconventional, which has made for some great conversation and debate as to what is really ‘art.’ We think the space has a classic and timeless appeal, and yet has unique elements that we could have never visualized on our own.” And for this visionary newcomer, the project is a fine portfolio springboard, indeed. ■

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