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ART IN DESIGN





Break With TRADITION

INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE: JULIE FISHER

INTERIOR DESIGN: MICHAEL DEL PIERO

TEXT: HEATHER CORCORAN

PHOTOGRAPHY: JANET MESIC MACKIE







With its limestone facade and brass Juliet balconies, a grand home in Chicago's Lincoln Park looks right out of the last century. When visitors walk through the marble-lined doorway, past a bronze Kintla chair by Caste and an ebonized walnut table by Christian Liaigre, to discover the dramatic walnut-and-brass staircase that swirls up to the living areas above, they could easily have mistaken that they've entered a historic space. But upstairs it's clear that this is the residence of a family with a sophisticated, modern design sensibility.

There, the home opens up to a modern Bulthaup kitchen accented with a minimalist artwork by Richard Serra, and a living area where an Adolph Gottlieb painting hangs—flanked by walnut-and-onyx sconces by Markus Haase for Todd Merrill Studio—above a mantel made of the same Nero Portoro marble used for the doorway trim. "It's a nod to how really well-crafted places used to be built," says architect Julie Fisher of Chicago's fc Studio. Fisher's firm handled the architectural aspects of the project and designed the chic bathrooms, while designer Michael Del Piero focused on the interior furnishings. (Along with a well-defined aesthetic and a modern art collection, the couple each brought a trusted partner to the project.)

Working within a developer's unfinished framework, Fisher sought to find "a great solution to a Chicago problem"—limited space and a tall, narrow footprint—by stripping the original plan of unnecessary details to match the homeowners' refined tastes. Using bronze details, walnut cladding and herringbone oak for the floors throughout the house, Fisher created a space that's both classic and, upon closer inspection, delightfully unexpected. The timeless sense of history one feels in the space is no accident. The residents, a married couple with a large blended family, were inspired by an aesthetic they call "moderne," an approach to modernism as influenced by the elegance of Chicago's Gold Coast and 1930s New York architecture as by the midcentury art in their impressive collection.

For Fisher, creating an impossible-to-pin-down set of references meant combining contemporary details like the thin reveals surrounding the millwork with more traditional elements like the plaster cove ceiling mouldings that emerge from the walnut cladding above the family room's limestone mantel. It's a detail that's easy to miss on first glance, but that lends the house its sophisticated polish. It's against that backdrop that Del Piero was able to build upon the visual language of "moderne."

