



refined haystack

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Melissa Lewis and Cari Giannoulas are a departure from the ordinary -- in the best way. As Principals at [Lewis Giannoulas Interiors](#), they are all about the blend: beauty and comfort, luxury and function. This philosophy allows them to come together on interior design projects with a certain ease and order, validating the idea that two heads are better than one.

Read on to learn more about their process, their partnership, and what inspires them.



Tell us about your partnership. How did that come about?

We first came together creatively on a large scale build in the Gold Coast (Chicago). The collaboration was effortless; we've been working together ever since.

How do the two of you work together, and how does your collaboration enhance your business?

We are both incredibly focused on making each space unique and personalized for every client. One of us can pull up an amazing piece of artwork and the other can seamlessly chime in with the perfectly paired sofa and pillow fabric. It's a very fluid process.

Your mantra is "livable luxury". Tell us what that means in your eyes, and how that is reflected in your work.

Livable luxury is about having a gorgeous home which dovetails beautiful pieces that not only look incredible but stand the test of time. We don't want anything to be too "precious" and feel that all areas of the home should be approachable.



How would you describe your own home? How is the design and decor different from the work you do in your clients' homes?

Every one of our spaces is totally personalized, our own homes included, but all embody our mantra. We each have family heirlooms that hold emotional value but we've paired them with newer bits that work with our ever-changing taste. Cari just turned her sitting room into a blush paradise anchored by an iconic photo. Melissa is in the midst of updating a classic sofa in a rich navy with some kelly green malachite pillows for punch.

When you're not working, what might we find you doing?

We both have small children, so spending time with family is a top priority. Travelling, cooking and constantly looking for new inspiration are right up there as well.

What are your favorite spots in Chicago for dining, shopping, and/or entertainment?

We love to cruise down Oak Street and stop into Maje, Calypso, and Max Mara to see what gorgeous things we can find. Bernard's, the bar at the Waldorf Astoria, is a hidden gem with incredible cocktails, and if you're in Logan Square, Lula Cafe is an all-time favorite.



Where do you go when you're in search of inspiration?

Over an ocean or on a walk around the block. You never know where inspiration will strike (although we do love to use our passports).

Describe your dream client.

Someone with the confidence to know what they like and to trust that we will pull it all together seamlessly. A sense of humor and a suitable budget are also a must.

Looking forward, what's next for your business?

We are working on a handful of true dream jobs that we're excited to be installing in the coming months. We are also in the middle of renovating a new studio for our offices that we'll be moving into shortly.

See more of Melissa and Cari's work on their [Refined Haystack profile](#) or on [their website](#). They can also be found on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).