



#### KITCHEN/SITTING AREA

The interior designer calls this 'lasting decor' – and the mid-century-style pieces certainly have an enduring appeal.

**Credenza**, De Coene at Goldwood. **Chair** by Jens Risom for Knoll in Dedar fabric. **Coffee table**, John Keal for Brown Saltman. **Gymnast sculpture** by Terrence Karpowicz. **Rug**, Carrier & Company for Lolo. **Sofa**, Cari Giannoulas Design



# A STORY FOR THE AGES

A sensitively restored historical house in the heart of Chicago has been given modern-classic interiors that will stand the test of time

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## KITCHEN

'The marble splashback made from one slab and the plaster hood are designed to create an old versus new world look,' says designer Cari. Bar stools, Blu Dot. Art, Anoush Bargamian. Pendant, The Urban Electric Co











**BAR**  
A darkly dramatic  
colour palette ensures  
this small space  
catches the eye.  
**Tiles**, Ann Sacks. **Lamp**,  
Visual Comfort. **Pendant**,  
RW Guild NY. The **artwork**  
is a gouache on paper  
signed Picasso



SITTING ROOM

The enveloping terracotta colour has created a real sanctuary.

**Sofa.** Interior Define. **Chair.** Fritz Hansen. **Rug.** Nina Freudenberger at Lulu and Georgia. **Pendant.** Lawson-Fenning





**DINING ROOM**  
True to James and Ben's philosophy of marrying different time periods, this space combines sculptural modern chairs and a retro chandelier. Custom walnut **table**, Cari Giannoulas. Dining **chairs**, Molteni&C. Suede Lounge **wallpaper**, Phillip Jeffries. **Pendant**, Hudson Valley Lighting. **Art**, Darwin Fitz. **Bowls**, Jayson Home



Sometimes you need to be patient to get the home of your dreams – and, thankfully, James Dixon and Ben Thompson were. ‘I’ve always been a fan of looking at local real estate to see what prices are doing and to discover all the unique homes Chicago has to offer,’ explains Ben. ‘There was a piece published about this house in an online newsletter so we decided to take a look with no intention of ever making an offer given the price. Sometime later, after never selling, the house came back on the market at a substantial discount.’

Dating back to 1894, the Romanesque Revival-style property was once owned by entrepreneur Paul J. Benson and then by opera singer Agnes Nering, who founded her own singing and dance school. The couple immediately fell in love with the same feature. ‘The grand staircase is breathtaking,’ says James. ‘There is nothing like it that I’ve seen in the city.’

The planned renovation of the house had to preserve and even magnify its rich history while reflecting James and Ben’s personalities and lifestyle. ‘Our style is the marriage of the past and the present, and the idea that best describes our mantra is compatibility of the two eras,’ says James. To achieve what they wanted, the couple called on interior designer Cari Giannoulas. ‘We have been working with Cari for more than eight years now and one of the reasons is that she has a great understanding of our taste and her direction is spot on,’ they explain. ‘Our taste is not very loud – we like rooms that have meaning and purpose and that are designed more to reflect the space than anything else. Cari is very good at creating a lasting decor.’ Cari recommended En Masse as

the architects for the project. As a team, they worked together to respect the home’s historical soul, preserving what they could while subtly adding a more modern twist. ‘Amazingly, the grand panelled doors with brass hardware, the fireplace woodwork, the original staircase and the front door metalwork were salvageable,’ says Cari.

When reimagining the space, Cari contemplated shaping the almost 700-square-metre home into a gentleman’s retreat and considered what that would look like from every room’s perspective. ‘I wanted it to be understated but intriguing once close enough to explore,’ she says. ‘For me, the home has always been about creating a private sanctuary – a quiet respite away from the busy day to day.’

Textures and colours play a leading role. ‘Here, every hue is muted or neutral and is used in its entirety – for skirting boards, architraves, ceilings and so on – in each room. Not only does it provide a sense of calm, but a monochromatic room allows the eyes to rest and instead focus only on the important pieces,’ says Cari. Leather and fabrics add softness to the different areas, which are connected through a fluid and cohesive visual language.

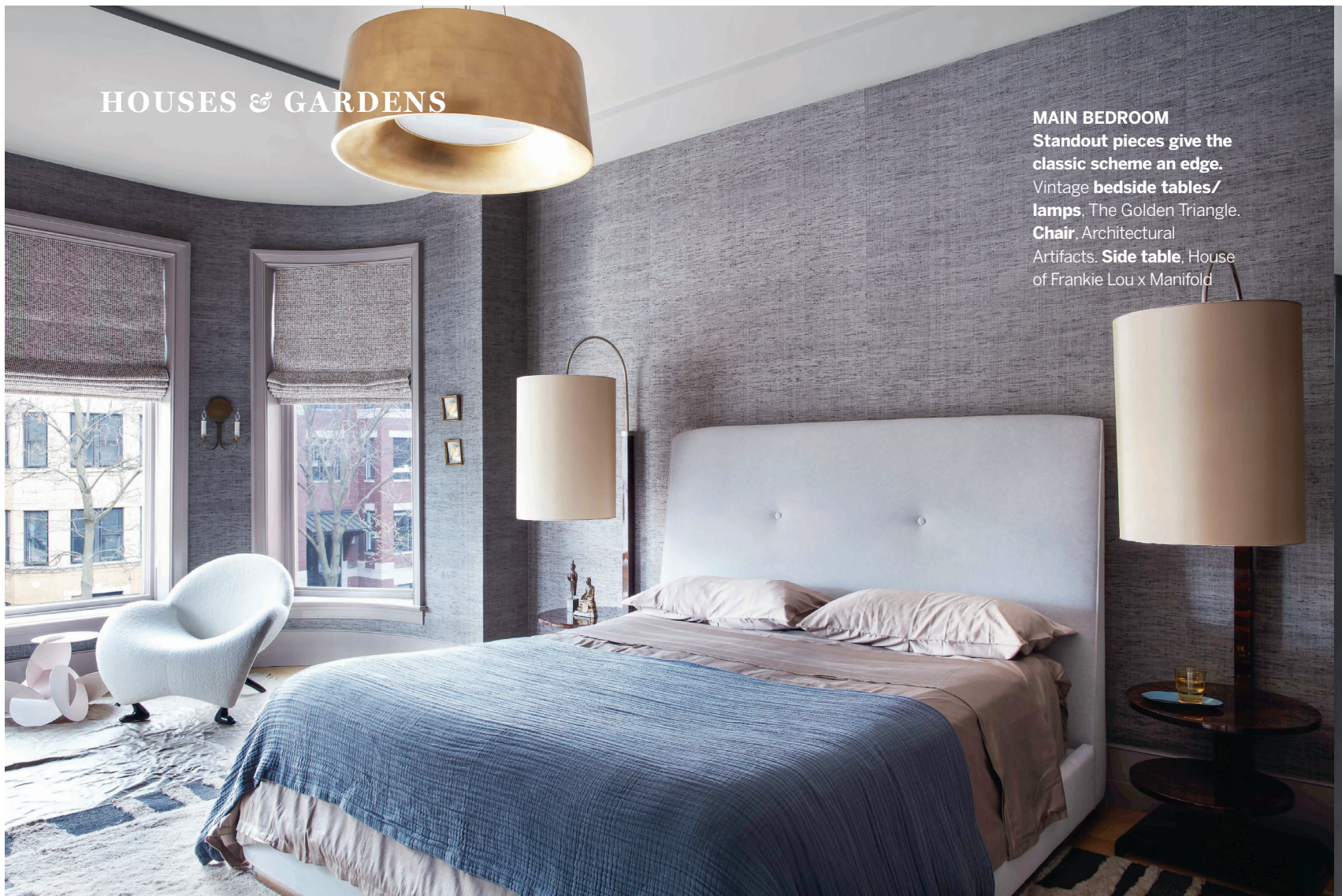
With a design and aesthetic planned to last for many decades to come, this fine old house enters a new chapter already bearing the imprint of its current dwellers: ‘Due to Ben’s love of wine, we decided to put a bottle of one of our friends and favourite winemaker’s wines in the walls of the house,’ says James. ‘It is called Realm and it was based on a quote of Shakespeare’s: ‘This blessed plot, this earth, this realm.’

■ [carigiannoulas.com](http://carigiannoulas.com)

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## HOUSES & GARDENS



### MAIN BEDROOM

Standout pieces give the classic scheme an edge.

Vintage **bedside tables/lamps**, The Golden Triangle.

**Chair**, Architectural

Artifacts. **Side table**, House of Frankie Lou x Manifold

### MEET THE DESIGNER

Cari Giannoulas shares her style inspiration  
**SECRET ADDRESS** L'Atelier 55 in Paris.

### INSPIRATION SOURCE

Old cities in Europe.

### FAVOURITE BUILDING

Agia Triada in Chania, Crete.

**DESIGN HEROES** Axel Vervoordt  
and Pierre Yovanovitch.

### YOUR STYLE IN THREE WORDS

Inviting, understated, sophisticated.

### WHAT'S ON YOUR COFFEE

**TABLE** Glass komboloi, design books,  
pottery and coasters.



### POWDER ROOM

The custom flooring  
and silk wallpaper  
evoke a jewel-box feel.

Amalfi Silk **wallpaper**,  
Phillip Jeffries. **Flooring**,  
Cari Giannoulas



**EN SUITE**  
The fireplace was inspired by one Cari discovered in an old Spanish castle. 'I held on to the idea for 10 years until I found the perfect place to design and recreate it,' she says. Bath, Kohler. Pendant light, Tobia Scarpa

