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SHADOW & LIGHT

INSPIRED BY 1920S GLAMOUR, A DESIGNER
TURNS A DOWNTOWN APARTMENT INTO
A HIGH-CONTRAST HAVEN.

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It was all about playing with light and shadow," says Joan Craig, of the Chicago pied-à-terre she designed for a Houston couple seeking an occasional escape from the Texas heat, "and how to bring a little sheen and sparkle and glimmer to spaces that had a lot of visual depth and darkness." Craig didn't have to look far for inspiration—the apartment is located in the Ritz-Carlton Residences on the city's Magnificent Mile, overlooking Lake Michigan. She had always admired the Beaux Arts-meets-Art Deco style of the 1920s architect Philip Maher, who designed the Ritz and the nearby Woman's Athletic Club. Fortunately for Craig, her clients—a businessman and an equestrian—were all for bringing the drama.

"The husband was the most involved in the project, and he is an engineer by training, so he's very engaged and interested in how things work," notes Craig. "He has a strong sense of design and fashion and really enjoys being part of the conversation." Most notably, he expressed a passion for wallcoverings, which developed as he traveled the world for work, discovering how rich patterns and textures had the power to transform a space. "He's crazy about wallcoverings," says the designer. "And not just in areas where one might expect to find them. He pushed us to use them in ways we never had before." In the living room, for example, the client suggested "punching up" the look by finding one to use on the ceiling. This was uncharted territory for Craig and her team, who ultimately chose a chunky grass cloth with a metallic glaze. "I was nervous it would be too glitzy, but it ended up being

perfect," she notes. "When you walk in, you feel the glow and the energy of the city, but in a really soft way. The city almost levitates over the room."

Breaking up the glamour is a giant photograph of a buffalo by Simen Johan, which holds a place of prominence along one wall of the room. The client found the piece mid-construction and a complete redesign of the millwork was required in order to accommodate it, a challenge that Craig, who worked with builder Matthew Ehrhard, of Hewitt Horn, Inc., welcomed. "We were excited to bring a little Texas attitude to Chicago," she says.

To play off the light-filled living area, Craig decided to go dark in the dining room. "The high-contrast palette was our way of putting a contemporary spin on the Deco theme. We didn't want to be too literal in terms of forms and profiles from that era," she says, referring to the mostly sleek, modern lines of the furniture in the apartment, much of which is covered in luxe fabrics by Holly Hunt and Donghia.

For the dining room walls, Craig opted for an inky bamboo-print wallpaper by de Gournay, which she had coveted for years but never had the opportunity to use. "I loved that paper and really wanted to do a dark room with a little bit of metallic so at night you'd have lighting picking up glints of leaves," she explains. "I've had that on my bucket list of things I wanted to bring to life at some point and was thrilled when our client agreed to use it." A pearlescent Donghia fabric treatment on the ceiling, as well as a crystal chandelier and metallic Roman blinds, make the room feel luminous both day and night.

Meanwhile, another wallpaper holds more personal significance for Craig. In the guest room, the lush hand-painted willow tree wallpaper, also by de Gournay, is a nod to her childhood. "When I was a kid, we had a willow tree with leaves that went all the way down to the ground," she recalls. "I called the space under the leaves 'the beauty saloon'—I didn't know the word for salon—and one afternoon I invited all the neighborhood kids into the 'saloon' and cut their hair. I got into major trouble, but I've had a thing for willows ever since."

Completing the jewel-box effect are the apartment's light fixtures, which Craig conceived with custom lighting designer Mark Figueredo. In the hallway, a row of pendants refracts light, casting shadows on the ceiling and walls. A show-stopping chandelier shimmers in the living area, which, in spite of its nod to Texas, ultimately feels like a love letter to Chicago. "When you enter the room and look outside, the lake is dark, dark, dark, and the city lights pop," Craig says. "I wanted to bring that feeling of the skyline into this room. It's pretty magical." ■

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—JOAN CRAIG



A custom hand-painted de Gournay wallcovering featuring a willow tree design on metallic leaf paper makes a shimmering statement in the guest bedroom. It was inspired by a childhood memory of Joan Craig, who designed the home.





The client's passion for wallcoverings drove the decision to install a metallic grass cloth by Phillip Jeffries on the ceiling, a risk Craig had never taken before. The sparkle makes the east-facing room "glow in the morning light," the designer notes. A custom Holly Hunt sofa upholstered in a Holland & Sherry velvet and a silk-wool rug by Tai Ping add texture.



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Opposite: During the renovation the clients acquired a large Simen Johan digital chromogenic print of a buffalo, so the team incorporated it into the design of the living room millwork. "The piece brings a little bit of Texas to Michigan Avenue," remarks Craig.

Below: A hand-painted silk wallpaper by de Gournay set off by a custom Murano chandelier creates a darkly glamorous tone in the dining room, which also features a Jean de Merry table and Mattaliano chairs covered in an Edelman leather.





Pops of sheen and color define the guest room, which hosts a bed dressed in Matouk linens with decorative pillows covered in a Jim Thompson fabric and an ebonized-walnut bedside table by Jasper by Michael S. Smith.

A wallcovering by Callidus Guild, a hammered nickel sink and polished nickel fittings by Waterworks, and custom sconces by Mark Figueredo Studio maintain the drama in the powder room.



City views are on full display when relaxing in the custom leather bed in the master bedroom. Once again wallcoverings played an important role, this time adding warmth with Dedar fabric from Holly Hunt.



