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ARCHITECTURAL INTERLUDES

COMPOSING A SUITE

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PLUS
**SWEET and SAVORY
KITCHENS**

An avid bridge player, the wife requested a table in her breakfast room that could handle coffee and croissants as ably as cards. Maher accommodated with a bespoke glazed white oak table with black hammered metal base that converts into a smaller game table.

NEXT CHAPTER

GLENCOE, ILLINOIS

Beecher and Robin Abeles were looking for a designer when they realized they already knew the perfect one. Years earlier, the Abeles had bought the home of **interior designer PAM MAHER** (of Pam Maher Design). They sensed this personal connection would help them feather their new nest.



For two empty nesters,
new construction and
interior design choices
are par for the course

TEXT ZLATA KOZUL NAUMOVSKI PHOTOGRAPHY AIMÉE MAZZENGA

INTERIOR DESIGN PAM MAHER DESIGN ARCHITECTURE BURNS + BEYERL ARCHITECTS



“I CURATED A LOT OF THINGS FROM THEIR TRAVELS AND HAD TO INTEGRATE THEM IN A SEAMLESS WAY.” PAM MAHER

“IT WAS PARAMOUNT THAT ALL OF THE LIVING SPACES FLOW EFFORTLESSLY FROM ONE TO THE NEXT, YET STILL MAINTAIN THEIR UNIQUE IDENTITIES.”

GARY BEYERL



“They bought my old house – that’s how I knew them!” quips Maher. Fast forward to an empty-nester stage of life and the Abeles desired a home that would reflect their current state and near future. In their next chapter of life, they envisioned expanded space for extended family visits with their adult children and, someday, grandchildren. Dogs, too – always dogs. They also wanted to include treasured pieces of artifacts they had collected while living abroad in Shanghai and Japan. “We wanted a beautiful, yet comfortable, home that would be a reflection of our travels and our history as a family,” notes Robin Abeles.

The Abeles worked with architect Gary Beyerl of Chicago-based Burns + Beyerl Architects (bba), who planned for large windows to flood the house with light and prioritized flow above all else. “It was paramount that all of the living spaces flow effortlessly from one to the next, yet still maintain their unique identities,” explains Beyerl. He achieved his goals through ample use of iron doors and handsome millwork-clad passages that allow the house to unfold slowly. A butler’s pantry that does double duty as a back kitchen and bar and serves as an axis to the main kitchen, dining room and sitting room was also created; it can be opened up for continuous flow or closed off with a hidden door.

For other furnishings and accessories, the interior designer didn’t have to look far. She freely pulled from their existing inventory. “I curated a lot of things from their travels and had to integrate them in a seamless way,” Maher recalls. To allow their special pieces to shine, Maher steered clear of busy patterns or bold colorful gestures on the walls. “A neutral palette allowed those things to be the star of the house,” she comments. African juju hats adorn a wall in one guest bedroom while 100 years’ worth of leather-bound National Geographic magazines line the husband’s study. Particularly striking are two Chinese elmwood cabinets and a pair of Qing Dynasty chairs flanking the fireplace in the living room. They hardly look incongruous in a house also decorated with \$12 flea market puppets elegantly framed in Lucite boxes and abstract art – a temporary-piece-turned-permanent-installation – painted by the designer’s daughter during a pandemic-induced bout of creativity.

It’s that mix of street and gallery – high and low – and personal possessions with deep meaning that chips away at any formality and gives a new home a sense of comfort and history. “They had some lovely things that gave the house as a new construction some soul,” Maher reveals. “It was nice to have that character. I didn’t have to go out and create it, which can look contrived. It was really them.”



PARTICULARLY STRIKING ARE TWO CHINESE ELMWOOD CABINETS AND A PAIR OF QING DYNASTY CHAIRS FLANKING THE FIREPLACE IN THE LIVING ROOM.