

CHICAGO

# luxe.

interiors + design®

INTERIORS / ARCHITECTURE / INSPIRATION



**GOLD  
LIST**



# *Sophisticated* YOUTH

NEWLYWEDS IN RIVER NORTH TEAM UP WITH A YOUNG  
DESIGNER TO CREATE AN ELEGANT RESIDENCE.

WRITTEN BY TATE GUNNISON / PHOTOGRAPHY BY NATHAN KIRKMAN



INTERIOR DESIGN: STEPHEN HOUNS

**F**ew projects are as personal as home design, which is why it is important that homeowners work with professionals with whom they click. That's what a pair of young newlyweds—him, a sports-marketing executive; her, a television-makeup artist—found in designer Stephen Young when they hired him to renovate their 11th-floor apartment in River North. “We met at a coffee shop, and there was an immediate connection,” Young recalls. “Designers have such an intimate relationship with their clients, and these homeowners wanted to work with somebody who knows how young couples live.”

Both the clients and Young were in their twenties—a personal quality that held major appeal as the couple took the next big step in their lives: investing in a five-rigger in the building where they had owned another apartment for years. “Stephen is young and understood where we were coming from,” the wife says. “I told him I wanted a California-chic style: clean with a boho vibe; easy and not over-designed.” One of the first steps in accomplishing this was painting walls white and installing new wide-plank white-oak flooring. But to make sure the casual ambience still felt elegant, Young upped the ante with jet-black doors, strategically placed dark-wood furnishings, sumptuous fabrics and a collected mix of metals. “The look is young and livable but also sophisticated,” Young says. “It just feels good.”

Natural daylight floods through sheer draperies on the south- and east-facing windows in the ethereal living room, where a neutral Moroccan-style woven-wool rug defines a cozy seating area furnished with a plush sectional sofa and a pair of chairs with nailhead trim. “The space is rich with texture and materiality, so it doesn't feel like a plain-white box,” Young says, pointing to the wood-and-metal cocktail table and a lamp made of crystal chandeliers. Of all the beautiful

elements in the room, his favorite is the fireplace wall, a hand-coated plaster with subtle reflective overtones. “The finish is very earthy and rustic, but the metallic makes it feel current and fresh,” the designer says. “It completely changes the space and ties all the materials together.”

Young repeated the plaster on the custom range hood in the open kitchen, which he reconfigured to create a more functional space with a mix of white and wood cabinetry. “The floor plan had a lot of odd angles we eliminated and tried to square off,” the designer says. “It was all about creating balance and symmetry.” By adding side walls to an existing ceiling soffit, for instance, Young formed a niche for the new amore-style cabinetry. To finish the space, he designed a stone waterfall island to replace the original boomerang-shaped one.

In the nearby open dining area, Young enlarged and centered a wall to offer a focal point for artwork—specifically, a large be-dyed diptych in a clear acrylic frame. The modern piece speaks the same language as the room's Sputnik-like chandelier with chrome-dipped bulbs suspended over the teak dining table and open-back chairs. “The table fits the rustic-casual vibe, and the chandelier adds a touch of sparkle and glam,” the designer says.

Bling wasn't the only quality Young introduced. After learning the wife loves elements like mercury glass, he scoured showrooms until he found an arched-mirrored table for the foyer. He also added antique-glass panels to a box he designed for a former dead space in the living room. “The couple had those details incorporated into their wedding, so I knew it would mean a lot to them,” Young says. “When you really get to know your clients, the result is always better.”

The palette is flipped on its head in the master bedroom, where gray paint colors all walls except an accent one clad with a metallic grass cloth. Woven into a diamond pattern, the material is a tactile backdrop for a velvet tufted headboard and wrapped-linen nightstands, creating the sophisticated-bohemian vibe the couple wanted.

The gray tones flow into the master bathroom in the form of custom cabinetry and veining in the white marble walls, which are offset with crisp-white quartz countertops. Echoing the shape of the polished-nickel cabinet pulls is a scalloped edge along the backsplash. “It creates a traditional style that's timeless and fits the caliber of this building,” Young says, pointing to the herringbone-tile flooring as another example. “Classic.”

On top of becoming friends with Young throughout the renovation, “the apartment turned out exactly how we imagined,” the wife says. As another result, she and her husband are working with the designer on a second project: “We're having a baby and turning the spare bedroom into a nursery,” she says. “We're very excited.” ■

“THE HOME'S LOOK IS YOUNG AND LIVABLE BUT ALSO SOPHISTICATED. IT JUST FEELS GOOD.”

—STEPHEN YOUNG



The entry of a...  
newlyweds in  
Lexington House  
Marshall Design  
table by John De  
underneath, the  
Bona Orange table  
lamp and the  
pendent



**Above:** In the living room, a wood-framed armchair by David Ellwood from Pauline Grace sewing, Polka's fabric from Donghia sits atop a jute/wood side table from Phillippe Collection. The Moroccan-style hand-knotted wool rug is from Oscar de la Renta.

**Left:** The living room's neutral sectional sofa and armchairs, all from Jonathan & Jonathan, gather around an InStyle Home wood-plank coffee table from Kenneth Luffing Chicago sporting a distressed iron base. The artwork above is by 2014 Richard Ross - C&D Designs.

To accommodate as much storage as possible, the renovated kitchen is outfitted entirely by Western Custom Cabinetry in Cincinnati, quartz countertops from Serenoa Enterprises and an island designer Stephen Young had extended and water-fall edge to the room. The antique-style bottle-style counter stools from Covetor were set in Polaris fabric from Douthett. The backsplash is from Missouri Tile.

With a polished nickel and crystal Sputnik style chandelier illuminates the natural oak from Regina Andrew Design and Bernhardt chairs with Callesonne & Luffe wall art by Cara Benson-Cook in a fluted acrylic frame is from CW Design.



“THESE HOMEOWNERS WANTED  
TO WORK WITH SOMEBODY WHO  
KNOWS HOW YOUNG COUPLES LIVE.”

-STEPHEN WUONI



**Above:** Cive Ruled glass off-axis sconces in polished nickel by Hudson Valley Lighting from Lightology are mounted to the mirror in the master bathroom, which has painted cabinetry from Western Custom Cabinetry and pure white quartz Westone countertops from StoneTap Design. The kitchen sink and faucets are from Crawford Supply.

**Left:** A (shown) patterned paper grass cloth wallpapering and a pair of linen wrapped Bernh and Bernh tables with natural binding add natural tones to the master bedroom. The tufted upholstered bed, also from Bernh, is dressed in Holly Hunt Great Plains wool shams. The (shown) West-patterned Resource Decor lamps are from SoArts.