

STYLE | DESIGN

# How a Pair of Empty-Nesters Created Their Dream Home

With the kids out of the house, a Chicago couple who love to entertain splashed out their home with color, pattern and sumptuousness. One long-desired priority: a walk-in closet and dressing room.

*By Elizabeth Sweet*

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THE NAP OF LUXURY The ‘adulting’ of the Chicago apartment, by local firm En Masse Architecture & Design, included an upholstery upgrade to velvet in the living room. PHOTO: RYAN MCDONALD

**“THEY JUST WANTED** what they wanted,” said designer Lucas Goldbach of the Chicago couple whose apartment he helped transform into their version of empty-nester nirvana. The pair—he in finance, she in fashion—had lived in their seventh-floor home for 25 years and renovated twice, most recently while raising kids.

Now on their own, the well-traveled, adventuresome duo wanted to lean into pattern mixing and to paint walls gutsier colors, recalls Goldbach, a member of Chicago's En Masse Architecture and Design, who devised the plan with founding partner Mike Shively. No longer wary of grape-juice stains and roughhousing, the homeowners could indulge in luxe fabrics like velvet and linen, and asked for decor that would charm the guests they frequently entertain.

A homework room off the kitchen became a cozy dining niche; a cedar closet, a sauna. To create the walk-in wardrobe the wife had imagined for years, they stole footage from a college-age son's bedroom. "She is known among friends as a stylish person," Goldbach said. To celebrate the dressing area's completion, the couple threw a reveal party.

Today, the once practical, family-focused home is maximized for dressing up, hosting and enjoying life. Here, how design helped it reflect the personalities of its liberated owners.



PHOTO: RYAN MCDONALD

## Don't Blow Out the Kitchen

When the couple was caught up in busy family life, their kitchen's aesthetic was not a priority. Red-and-white checkerboard cork floors and white cabinets sufficed. The current renovation honors the building's 1920s pedigree, with dark-grouted subway tile and a classic checkerboard floor. The period-proper black-and-white palette offers a reprieve

from the rest of the apartment's rambunctious color. As another nod to the kitchen's art deco vintage, Goldbach and team rejected an open plan, repeating arches and transoms found elsewhere in the home. "The clients still have guests crowding into the space when entertaining," said Goldbach, "which is part of the fun of having folks over."



PHOTO: RYAN MCDONALD

## Bang Out a Banquette

The study area off the kitchen became a high-design breakfast nook. Scalamandre's geometric Amazink Velvet on the banquette and lively floral Yokata Bleu wallpaper share enough color that their energetic patterns mesh. The decor here and in the exuberant walk-



in closet, the first decorating schemes to be completed, set the tone for the rest of the apartment. “Those spaces had so much richness,” said Goldbach, “and the clients were like, ‘Oh, now that I see I could do it here, I want it everywhere.’ ”



PHOTO: RYAN MCDONALD

## Enliven the Living Room

A formal entertaining room once painted a subdued blue-gray, the parlor needed vibrancy now that it’s used more often. “They find reasons to celebrate,” said Goldbach of the couple. The new wall color, Benjamin Moore’s Fort Pierce Green, energized the space. “The previous iteration did not have the same level of richness,” said the designer. He kept the furniture layout intact but dialed up the level of saturation and pattern mixing, with assists from upholstery in punchy Fabricut textiles and an emerald Chinese art deco rug from 1stDibs.



PHOTO: RYAN MCDONALD

## Dress Up the Closet

Goldbach describes the wife as a “very bold, very confident dresser.” Fittingly, as a jumping-off point for her dream closet’s palette, she was drawn to Mary Katrantzou’s unrestrained Botanical Paradise Rug from the Rug Company. A citrine window seat and a Roman shade in a bubbly Voutsas print play supporting roles. Benjamin Moore’s Franklin White, a subtle peachy-pink, coats the walls and cabinets. “In a closet, you need a color that doesn’t affect how you look in the clothes you’re trying on,” said Goldbach. The shade delivers “a bouncing glow on the skin.”



PHOTO: RYAN MCDONALD

## Let Color Clothe You

The couple's new dressing room, which claimed square footage from a closet, a hallway and their son's bedroom, gave the husband more wardrobe storage, too. It also makes the pair's bedroom suite an experience, says Goldbach, who notes that the wife "loves when rooms envelope you in a color." Doing the job here: Benjamin Moore's Regent Green on the cabinetry and the ceiling's venetian-plaster coating. The same fabric found in the Roman shade of the wife's walk-in closet reappears here as contents-concealing curtains.





PHOTO: RYAN MCDONALD

## Gussy Up the Guest Room

Goldbach and his team updated an existing guest room to suit visitors and their son (whose room became the new closet) when he is in town. Artwork and a zebra rug from his old digs make the son feel at home, but in the sophisticated context of a plaid, menswear-inspired wall covering by Phillip Jeffries, luxe bedding and midcentury Lane night tables, his pieces “live in a more grown-up way,” said Goldbach.



PHOTO: RYAN MCDONALD

## Get Well, Be Well

A cedar closet had served as overflow wardrobe storage, but the new walk-in closet rendered it redundant. The clients asked that this soothing retreat take its place. “Saunas are a beautiful thing, covered in wood. They exude relaxation,” Goldbach said. The couple’s Clearlight Infrared Sanctuary Sauna sits steps from an adjacent fitness room. “They’ve traveled a lot and experienced lovely accommodations and spas around the world,” Goldbach said of the couple. “It’s just a little bit of that for them to have at home.”

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