

# PORTFOLIO



Photo: Tony Soluri / Architecture: dSpace Studio

Prior to construction of Zinc House (above), Stefanie and Jared Schenk and their kids lived on this Chicago property in a multifamily residence. When they finally acquired the double lot, they focused on building their dream house — a private, open-plan home with a strong connection to the outdoors that functioned for a busy family. Wanting it completed in a year, they lined up a team to raze the existing structure and resurrect a new one. A fun and intense collaboration ensued between builder, architect, and interior design firm, and their new home was delivered close to the goal. On the following pages, PROJECT Interiors discloses the details.



# POMP MODERN

AT THE CROSSROADS OF LUXURY AND PLAY, PROJECT DELIVERS A CUSTOM ABODE IN RECORD TIME.

WRITTEN BY **JANE DAGMI**  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY **GIANNI FRANCHELLUCCI**  
*(except where noted)*

“It was an aggressive timeline,” recalls Aimee Wertepny, principal of PROJECT interiors, a Chicago-based firm known for unapologetically distinct environments. “A major feat,” agrees senior designer Jennifer Kranitz. They couldn’t wait to start.

The designing women at PROJECT rise to challenges and have a reputation for creating unique and demanding requests themselves. “With us, you know nothing is ever going to be normal,” says Wertepny. “We’re not off the bolt gals.”

The scope of PROJECT’s responsibilities included interior

finishes and elevations, millwork, kitchen and baths, tile and more decorative lighting like the Rubn fixture in the kitchen. Suspended by leather belts, the linear profile does not upstage the dramatic marble backsplash that Wertepny likens to art. The design firm also lent opinions on stair, door and trim details.

Working extensively with developers in past jobs, Wertepny and Kranitz flourish in new-build situations. They are literate in construction documents and comfy on job sites. “We really want the bones to support everything else,” says



The core of Team Schenk included PROJECT, dSpace Studio, and LG Development Group.

(*Opposite page*) “Who doesn’t want a large monochromatic abstract painting from the earth anchored in the heart of the home?” Wertepny poses, referring to the kitchen’s slab of Orca marble that was love at first sight.

(*This page, clockwise from top*) The Schenks inherited the goliath marble table, and PROJECT designed the room around it, adding a slim custom banquette that floats on acrylic legs and sports an outdoor performance fabric. The commissioned triptych by Gina Dorough is painted the same Benjamin Moore OC64 as the wall.

Stefanie’s command central overlooks the living area and features a mohair banquette. The two-story mobile is a unique addition.

Acoustics dictated putting the piano in the entry which prompted its unexpected companion seat. “To do a standard bench would’ve been a missed opportunity.”  
Photo: Aimee Mazzenga



“We nicknamed this home ‘shades of play’ for a reason — it all whistles one happy tune. Never have we had a client pull out a bag of tricks like Stefanie Schenk

—Aimee Wertepny



(Left to right) Metallic accents in the master bath include a painted and varnished feature wall and brass inlay between custom-cut floor tile. The chandelier is by Apparatus. Photo: Tony Soluri. In the bedroom, more brass inlay traverses the rift-cut oak wall behind the bed. The Sibilla pendant is by Leucos. Master bath photo: Tony Soluri.

**It's our job to tell a story ... You only get so many things to select, and they have to mean something.**

—Jennifer Kranitz

Kranitz, who confesses to be a frustrated architect. PROJECT handed over 60 pages of detailed construction drawings. “When we turn stuff over, we’re thinking ‘How can we prevent the phone from ringing?’” Wertepny says. “Measure thrice, cut once!”

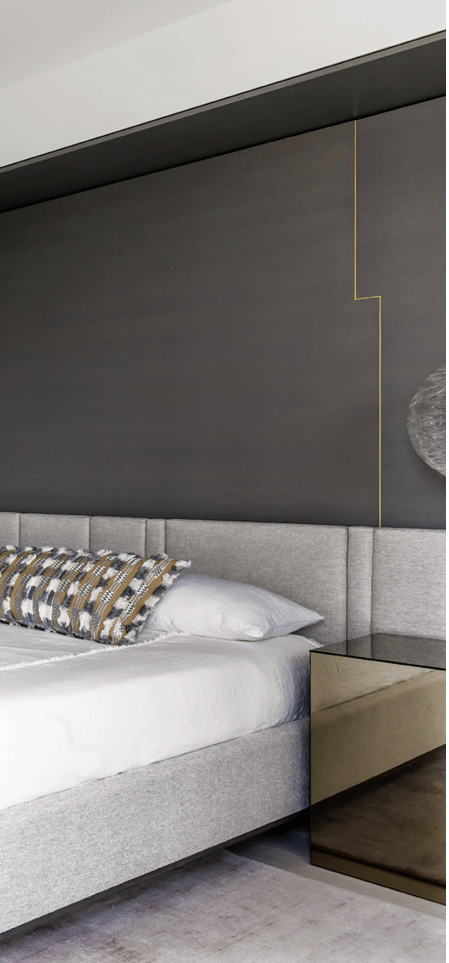
Architecture coupled with the Schenk family’s personalities and preferences dictated the design narrative. Important elements included ample open shelving to hold a curated mix of accessories they had collected, banquettes because Jared and Stefanie both adore them, and flexible family-friendly spaces that reflect the chic and oft cheeky tenor of the house. A fully loaded pantry with a steam oven, freezer and large white board is tucked behind the facing kitchen.

The decoration is adventurous, and its playful spirit begins in the foyer. First impressions include a piano bench fashioned from a charred log draped in leather, rubber and crystals; a two-story brass mobile; and a pair of nude portraits, purchased

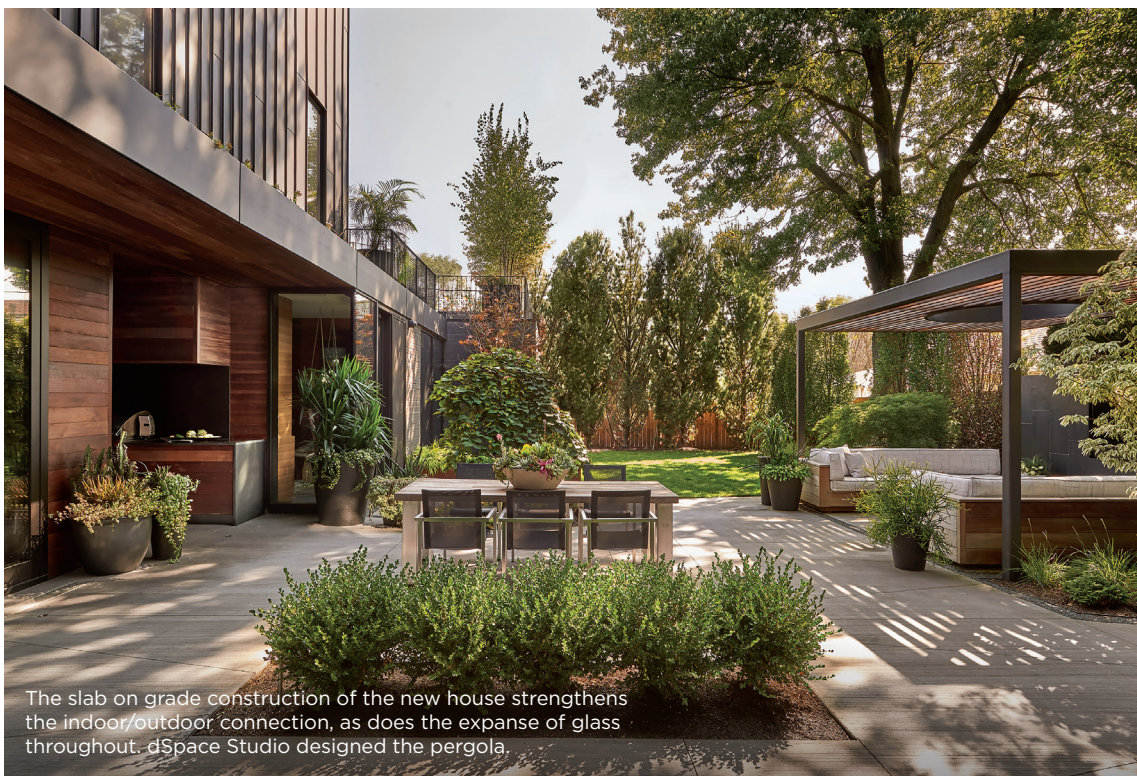
in Cuba, that greet people at the front door. “We love to challenge people’s ideas of what they might expect,” says Wertepny.

Local artisans and manufacturers are integral to PROJECT’s penchant for custom solutions. “It makes us proud when we can highlight our fellow creative people from our city doing epic things,” says Wertepny. The living room rug, for example, woven by Chicago textile and fiber innovator Brian Erden, is a high-low pile textile embedded with pieces of brass. Using their meticulous furniture plan as guide, PROJECT identified the exact locations where the rug’s topography would change and where the metallic accents would work best.

Several weeks after installation, Kranitz visited the Schenks. “You really captured who we are,” Stefanie told her. Music to a designer’s ear, this is the highest compliment. Kranitz says, “To show the client in the very best light, to create an expression of who they are that they might not be able to express themselves, that is our goal.” ▶



(Left to right) With only one proper guest bedroom, Kranitz recommended a foursome of bunks for extra sleepover space, each equipped with a reading light. The floating stair, fabricated by Taylor Street Fabrications, features European white oak treads.



The slab on grade construction of the new house strengthens the indoor/outdoor connection, as does the expanse of glass throughout. dSpace Studio designed the pergola.