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THE FLUFF STUFF • ADVENTURES IN KIDDIELAND DESIGN

X MARKS THE SPOT!

Leo Burnett's worldwide chief creative officer, Mark Tutssel, ditches the cornices and turrets of his native London spread to take a modernist Chicago flat to the max

BY MEGHAN MCEWEN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY TONY SOLURI

Seeing the inside of a person's home is a little like getting inside their head. And in the case of Mark Tutssel—worldwide chief creative officer of Leo Burnett—that's one hot ticket to genius (and not a thing like *Mad Men* might have you believe).

A talent-attracting Brit who has been with the Chicago-based advertising agency for the past eight years, Tutssel jokes that he "spends more time in the air than on the floor." Tired of corporate housing and the hotel circuit, he wanted a place to call home while working from the Chicago headquarters.

If that sounds vague, make no mistake: A guy who leads an ace team of thousands of creatives from more than 94 offices across the world knows exactly what he wants. In this case, it was something very different from his beyond-stately period family home in London. Working with local designer Patrizio Fradiani, Tutssel and interior designer wife Julie traded in the classic marble fireplaces, cornices and turrets of their ultra-formal 1819 spread—situated on the second oldest road in the U.K., next to the Queen's house and overlooking the Royal Park—for a pristine modern flat every bit a modern-day antidote.

"He's a very trusting and intuitive person," says Fradiani about his busy client. "Things just speak to him." And that's exactly what happened when Tutssel paid a visit to one of the modernist units in Ranquist Development's sleek glass-and-steel building on Superior during his lunch break. He decided in five minutes flat to put in an offer.

"I liked the structure and the quality of the design. It's an impressive-looking building. As a human being [living in London] I'm used to walking into rooms that have height," says Tutssel about the uncharacteristically high ceilings. "The rest was an open canvas in terms of possibility. I was drawn to the clean, crisp lines of the space." They devised a neutral color palette of whites and taupes—including beautiful, muddy-colored concrete floors, all cracked and earthy—to brave the way for the real vista: unbeatable, in-your-face city views.

TRANSPARENT MOTIFS: Designed by Miller/Hull Partnership for Ranquist Development, this nine-story mid-rise in River North mimics the structural façade of the John Hancock, winning an AIA Award in 2007.





With floor-to-ceiling windows along two perpendicular walls, we're not talking just any view. Rather than hover ominously between land and sky (like the John Hancock, whose stoic, x-bracing structure it mimics), this nine-story building is grounded. Tutssel didn't want to live above the city; he wanted to live in it. And the panorama from his seventh-floor perch gives him just that. "In most high-rises, that's still parking garages," says Fradiani. "Here, the city is in your house. You're looking at the rooftops, cars, streets, people walking by—and that draws you into the urban experience."

When it came to outfitting the interior, the two fastidious detail-sticklers first launched a customized cosmetic makeover only a crack

team of perfectionists could detect afterwards. Standard doors were replaced with oversized, sliding glass panels; mechanical vents were reconfigured to disappear; and Fradiani designed an architectural composition around the fireplace. "I like when things are related to each other," Fradiani says.

Not surprisingly, Tutssel was drawn to Fradiani's attention to detail and decidedly cerebral approach to design. The two routinely engaged in a creative tango of sorts, going back and forth about comfort versus clean lines, aesthetic perfection versus functionality, and the sum of individual pieces as part of the whole.

"I'm interested in really thoughtful design—stuff that serves a purpose," says



Left: The living area functions as a room within a room, starring the Egg Chair (Luminaire), which provides the perfect reading nook. Taccia lamp by Flos is one of Fradiani's all-time favorites; Mart side chairs by Antonio Citterio for B&B Italia (Luminaire); and "Smoke" coffee tables by Cappellini (Luminaire). Obama "Hope" print by Shepard Fairey (original first-run print). *Above:* The glass curtain wall gives the dining room a spectacular backdrop. The Beam table by Porro (Luminaire) softens the shape of the room. Foscarini's Twiggy lamp is a bold take on the classic Arco.

"I grew up on the Mediterranean, and I miss the ocean very much. [This piece] is a lovely way to wake up in the city and see the ocean... and through such an artistic lens."



Opposite page: Photograph by Doug Fogelson and Knoll's Swan chair pop in Tutssel's neutral bedroom. **Above:** At the end of the long, clean-lined hallway, Tutssel's bedroom boasts another floor-to-ceiling view. **Right:** The floating shelves by Porro have a glassy, ethereal feel—and can display anything from art and sculpture to plants. Sculpture by Richard MacDonald.



Tutssel. "I think a lot of design gets in the way of functionality. At the end of the day, it's a home and needs to be enjoyed."

Ultimately, their discourse elevated the designer-client connection, and the results speak for themselves. Varying shades of orange color—like the iconic Egg Chair and bending Foscarini lamp—unexpectedly pop from a serene and minimal designscape.

"I was open-minded," says Tutssel, who believes in letting the designer do his job—and do it well. "Patrizio had a very clear concept. I liked that concise articulation of what he was trying to create... And he's unwavering. He creates quite a compelling argument," he laughs. And in Tutssel's line of work, these are qualities to be admired. "Every piece he has chosen for my home is for a reason. It all works

as a jigsaw puzzle." But rest assured that Tutssel was involved in selecting every single piece of furniture, always test-driving for comfort. "I wanted to have an active part in it," he says. "Otherwise, they're just objects."

When it comes to his art collection, he yields less to collaboration, honoring instead his own internal dialogue and personal attachments. Take the sculptor Richard MacDonald, whom he discovered on a family trip to Laguna and has been collecting ever since. A set of famous rock posters (The Grateful Dead, The Who and Jimi Hendricks) signed by artist Rick Griffin nod to his quirky interests, while a limited-edition Obama poster reflects his connection to Chicago and a specific, meaningful moment in time.

And that seemingly random piece of

religious iconography that doesn't look a bit like any of his other artwork but somehow works perfectly for reasons you can't explain? Tutssel bought the gilt-framed painting of the Virgin of Guadalupe in a small village outside Mexico City. "We were walking down a cobbled street, and I just happened to look through a window, and I saw this old lady painting in this beautiful, open-plan courtyard with a huge vine wrapping itself down a beautiful yellow-ochre wall," he reminisces. "She was painting that painting, which is obviously the most religious icon in Mexico. And she paints with 24-karat paint. I walked in, and I fell in love." There's no doubt about it: Tutssel understands the sell of a well-told story. "Creativity is the currency of life," he says. And indeed, for him it is. ■