

* **The Guide to Modern Design**

Metropolitan Home

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* Chicago Glamour, p.96

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Aluminum-frame doors from Bosca's Light series define rooms but allow for the free flow of sunshine. Forgoing moldings and baseboards makes the 8 1/2-foot ceilings seem higher. Living room furniture includes an Alfa sofa (designed by Emaf Progetti for Zanotta), an Iconic Le Corbusier chaise and Minotti's sleek Klemm coffee tables, as well as a Verner Panton floor lamp from Design Within Reach. Matching carpets in the living room and adjacent family room tie the spaces together.





WINDDOWS ON THE WINDY CITY

Designer Patrizio Fradiani helped an open-minded Chicago couple to create a dynamic home in a style that's all their own.

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When Irina Vdovets and David Azran went hunting for their first joint residence, they had a vague idea of what they wanted: something spacious, with views. But after traipsing through virtually every building on Chicago's Near North Side, "everything started to look the same," proclaims Vdovets. "All of them were beautiful and had great views." None of the real estate moved them until they happened on a place that had a wraparound terrace with 270-degree views of pure Chicago cityscape.

"We were stunned," she gushes. "It was like a house: almost 3,000 square feet inside and 1,000 square feet outside."

But Azran, who owns the largest real estate foreclosure company in Illinois, was a hard sell. "He only buys super deals, and this one wasn't exactly a great business venture," Vdovets cracks. So she went to work on his mind with the same steely determination she brings to her occupation as an Olympic gymnastics coach. "I told him it will be the most desirable apartment in the city when we're done with it," she says.

Transforming the space into the jewel she envisioned turned out to be an unexpected and surprising learning process. "It was already beautiful. We didn't think there was that much to do to it," says Azran. But two apartments had been slapped together to create the unit, making the layout choppy, and the terrace was bare. "We knew we needed to do something. We just weren't sure what," says Vdovets. So they interviewed a stream of architects and designers, listening to ideas. Again nothing moved them—until they met Patrizio Fradiani. "He proposed a total gut job," she remembers. "That totally shocked us, but after it sunk in, it really made sense."

A living room vignette states the home's design palette: slate-gray Venetian plaster walls with rosewood-paneled storage closets; furnishings made of metal, glass and laminate; a color scheme of cream, gray and brown accented with lavender and yellow. Fradiani designed the credenza; pendant fixtures are by Davide Groppi, glass shelves by Porro. The *Rive Droit* chairs (from Luminaire) are by Patrick Norguet for Cappellini.

PRODUCED BY SUSAN TYREE VICTORIA AND LISA SKOLNIK.
PHOTOGRAPHS BY NATHAN KIRKMAN. WRITTEN BY LISA SKOLNIK.





* **Key to the Style**

- A consistent palette of materials throughout helps unify the entire apartment.
- The color scheme is neutral with unexpected accents (primarily yellow/green and shades of purple).
- Eliminating baseboards and crown moldings makes the rooms seem taller.
- Sliding doors maximize space; glass allows for a free flow of light.
- Translucent and reflective materials maximize the light in the rooms.
- Accents are arranged in multiples, such as the trio of identical lamps and side tables.

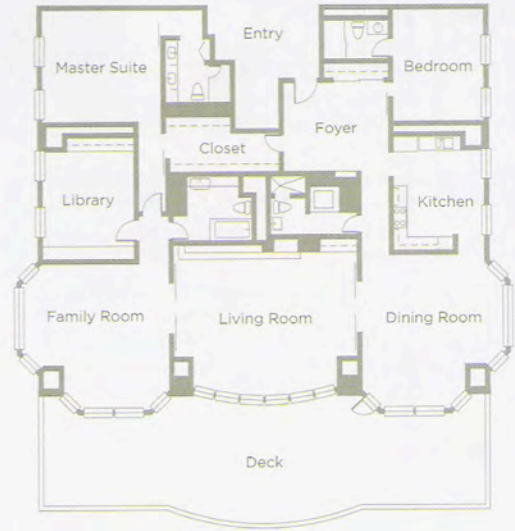
The couple had always intended to jettison the possessions from their individual homes and furnish the new place from scratch with things to suit their life together in a new home, so Fradiani was dealing with an empty apartment. Why the seismic makeover? Fradiani doesn't like to shake things up for no reason, but in this case, "The layout just didn't work," he summarizes. "Even with walls of windows in every room, the spaces seemed close and oppressive" because the ceilings were low and the place was extensively paneled in mahogany with oak floors stained to match.

The clincher for Fradiani was the couple's taste. "They showed me pictures of what they liked," he says, "and everything was very sleek and bright, really glamorous. They clearly wanted the place to have a huge 'wow' factor. It would have been impossible to do that with the dark palette of materials that existed."

Out went the mahogany, and the espresso-stained floors were given a new dove-gray wash. An open space that runs the whole 70-foot length of the apartment and encompasses the dining, living and family rooms stayed approximately the same. But the kitchen, bedrooms, bathrooms and hallway to the living area were reconfigured to radiate off a new, generously sized foyer that was cobbled together from a walk-in closet, a tiny vestibule and two narrow hallways. To complete his materials palette, Fradiani chose slate-gray Venetian plaster that sheathes all the apartment's core walls and paneling of palisander rosewood as well as light-maximizing sliding aluminum and glass doors.

Left: In the family room, a trio of Maxalto steel-and-glass tables for B&B Italia hold a dramatically well-edited collection of vintage glass. Right (from top): In the same room, a pair of *Blake* armchairs by Rodolfo Dordoni for Minotti are covered in wool velvet (the coffee table is from Desalto, the *Diana* side table by Konstantin Grcic for Classicon); interior designer Patrizio Fradiani (left) with the homeowners Irina Vdovets and David Azran.





Early in the design process, Fradiani made a comment to the couple that had a seminal effect on them. Vdovets explains: “He said, ‘I don’t understand people who live and dress in a modern way, but then want traditional homes.’ I’m from Moscow, and David grew up in Morocco, France and Israel, so we weren’t that familiar with modern style. Working with Patrizio was a real education for us.”

Sometimes the couple had difficulty conceptualizing everything Fradiani proposed, especially since they ordered most of their furnishings and even such features as the sliding doors from Italy, where Fradiani was born. They had to wait almost a year to see some of the pieces in three dimensions—when they were unwrapped in the living room. “Some things we liked immediately, some things we didn’t and some things were confusing,” Vdovets admits, although very little was returned. When the pieces were all in place together, she found, the individual decisions made more sense.

One aspect of the project they were always sure about was the terrace. “From the minute I saw it, I imagined it filled with lots of greenery and comfortable, modern furniture,” Vdovets reports. “We entertain a lot, so I knew we would use it. But when it was done, we started eating practically every meal out there,” she says.

Today, the irony the couple faces is that although Vdovets’s prediction came true—the apartment is one of the most desirable properties in the city—Azran isn’t about to turn it for a profit. “We’re not going anywhere,” Vdovets says. ☘

See Resources, last pages.

Left (from top): The dining room is dominated by a Swarovski crystal chandelier over a B&B Italia *Athos* table by Paulo Piva and *Liz* chairs from Poltrona Frau (the art is by Gabriela Morawetz); a lacquered *Roll Wide* credenza by Piero Lissoni for Porro fills the dining room window bay. Right: The city serves as the backdrop to a modern Mediterranean roof deck with Fradiani-designed sofas and *Stones* tables by Maya Lin for Knoll.

