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# Lake Effect

*A Peoria family gives their downtown pied-à-terre a posh makeover.*

| By Amalie Drury |  
| Photography by Tony Soluri |

Many things can be forgiven—in this case, a lot of old red carpet, mirrored walls and a choppy floor plan—when a condo happens to be located in a prime Gold Coast building with a bank of windows overlooking Lake Michigan and the city's best beach.

It was the view that sold Peoria residents Elizabeth and Mike Stone on the three-bedroom, 2,500-square-foot spread in the Carlyle building that would become their new pied-à-terre. All they needed was someone with the vision to bring the place stylishly up to date.

The Stones liked what Chicago interior designer Frank Ponterio had done with a friend's home nearby, so they invited him over for a brainstorming session. "I think it was the quickest interview in history," Ponterio says. "We hit it off, and they hired me a whole 12 minutes later."

For both the condo and the family—the Stones' main home in Peoria was more traditional—this was a chance for a modern, fresh start. The idea was to create an open floor plan that would maximize the views and provide a comfortable place for entertaining city friends and out-of-town visitors.

A view of the completed dining area and kitchen, the latter courtesy of local design company O'Brien Harris









*“I was afraid to take a chance on a color that bold. I thought it would be too dark, but it has turned out to be the most complimented aspect of the home.”*

—ELIZABETH STONE ABOUT PONTERIO'S PUSH FOR DARK GRAY PAINT

With so many walls to take out, the project quickly morphed into a full gut rehab. “Frank was confident about what he thought he and his team could do,” says Elizabeth. “We trusted his ideas, and they turned out to be spot-on. He chose everything—every detail.”

First things first: The kitchen needed to be made a part of the main living space. “It was totally closed off from everything else, which was a waste of 10 feet of the lakefront view,” says Ponterio. Local kitchen design team O’Brien Harris installed white cabinets, high-end appliances and sleek stainless steel countertops. To give the family and their guests multiple, flexible ways to enjoy meals together, there’s a

walnut island topped with white marble for informal snacks, an intimate dinette table snuggled up next to a window for one-on-one meals and a dramatic round dining table for dinner parties.

A small but fully equipped leather-upholstered bar off to one side (“My husband’s favorite spot,” says Elizabeth) marks the transition from the kitchen into a plush living room where the rug and furniture are done in neutral hues that show off the dark gray paint. “I was afraid to take a chance on a color that bold,” says Elizabeth. “I thought it would be too dark, but it has turned out to be the most complimented aspect of the home.” The living room’s longest wall is covered in handpainted

The living room’s south wall got an organic boost thanks to handpainted silk wallpaper. Opposite page: The smartly appointed foyer boasts a recessed chandelier.

silk wallpaper sprinkled with embroidered, shimmering blue cherry blossoms that mirror the ever-changing hues of the lake. Doors open onto a balcony where the Stones read books, sip coffee and watch the beach activity from a pair of cushioned chairs.

The relaxed elegance continues on the west side of the condo, where the bedrooms, bathrooms and a cozy TV den—the perfect place for the Stones’ two teenagers to spread out—employ a lighter palette. The Stones love staying at the Delano in South Beach, and the hotel’s all-white rooms served as the inspiration for their serene, spalike master bedroom.

Ponterio is a lighting perfectionist—lighting fixtures are part of a new furniture



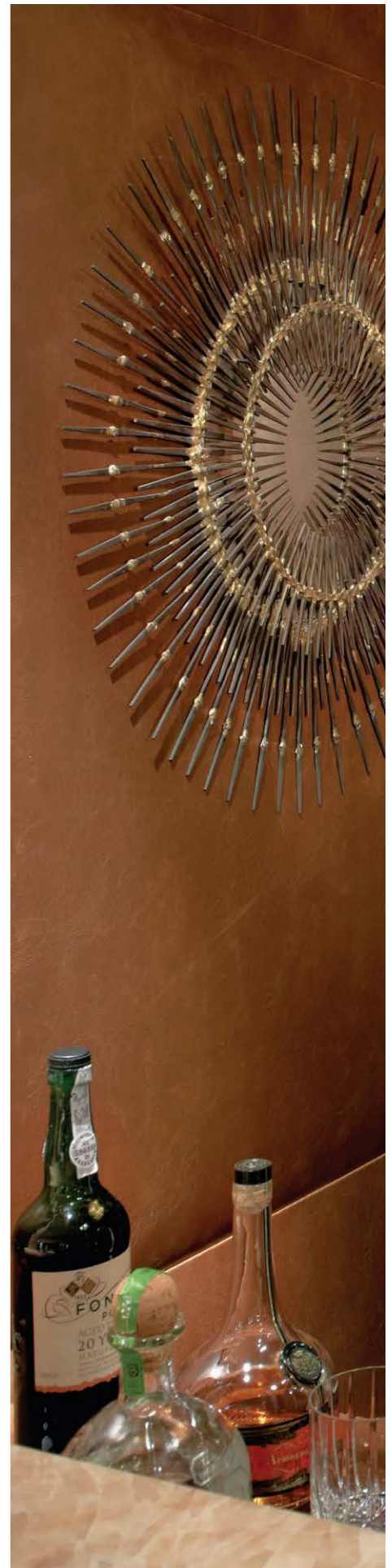
collection that he recently debuted with Charleston-based manufacturer Avrett—but thanks to the way the building’s heating system runs through the condos’ ceilings, getting the lighting right proved the biggest challenge of this project. “You couldn’t just move things and put them where you wanted,” he says. “We had to be really careful.”

Stone says she initially questioned Ponterio’s lighting plan and commented on it throughout the process. “I thought he was going overboard and the place was going to look like a Christmas tree.” Now, she says, she loves having light settings for different times of day. “He created so many moods.”

“The Stones are a fun couple with a great sense of humor, and they gave me the freedom to create something artful,” Ponterio says. “That’s what designers really want.” Almost every client promises to throw a big party for the team that works on their project, but, Ponterio says, “Liz and Mike really followed through. They invited everyone and it was a nice, catered evening.”

Calling themselves “over-the-top pleased” with the outcome of the city project, the Stones’ were inspired by their experience with Ponterio to lure him out to Peoria for a look at the big house. “We quickly realized that it was a little outdated, too,” says Elizabeth with a laugh. “It just needed some Frank-style finesse.” ■

Designer Frank Ponterio says Tandem Construction, who handled the gut renovation and all of the construction, made the process “painless, efficient and fun.” Opposite page: The leather-upholstered bar is owner Mike Stone’s favorite nook in the home.



PHOTOGRAPH BY CYNTHIA LYNN

