

WEB-EXCLUSIVE HOME TOUR

Inside a Family-Friendly Chicago Home That Was Transformed Through Classic Architecture

Interior designer Sasha Adler imbued the apartment with the sense of history her clients craved, and a two-story playhouse

By Kristen Flanagan

Photography by Douglas Friedman

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Upon stepping off of the elevator and into the expansive Chicago apartment of interior designer Sasha Adler's longtime clients, guests are transported to a gallery-like space where modern art and exquisite antiques commingle. In the foyer, bold selections from the homeowners' blue-chip collection—contemporary works by Sean Scully, Rose Wiley, and Richard Prince—are at home among gilded light fixtures and filigreed furniture. The herringbone wood floors, black-and-white checkered tile, and intricate molding suggest a prewar heritage entirely by its design.

“It’s a brand new building,” Adler says of the project, which presented a blank canvas. “They purchased raw space, so we wanted to create a sense of architecture in the home and a sense of history.” The designer worked in concert with the wife, whose parents’ background is in antiques. “She has a real appreciation and understanding for collecting furniture and art,” Adler says. The collector’s eye that the design and client share is evident throughout the home.

The oversized living room with a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows offers tremendous views of the Windy City. A space this grand might render cavernous or cold in the wrong hands, but Adler achieves an inviting, sophisticated feel. “The rooms are large, but we really wanted to create warm, intimate spaces for this family to live in,” she says. Adler accomplishes this with vintage and bespoke furnishings—a 17th-century console next to a 1970s coffee table and custom sofa, for example. “The idea was to create a formal living room infused with a modern-day sensibility.” The floorplan is dotted with a series of seating areas providing the flexibility and function that the clients’ family—including six children under the age of 10—requires. “It’s not roped off. We designed it so that they could really use it,” Adler explains. It’s easy to imagine the couple sipping cocktails on the double-sided daybed in front of the antique fireplace or the children having a Monopoly marathon at the card table stationed beneath a vibrant Basquiat.

The kitchen and adjoined breakfast room are another family hub. For construction and cabinetry, Adler collaborated with Chicago-based Northworks and O'Brien Harris, while her team placed jewelry-like finishing touches, including the custom étagères and brass legs for the island. (Adler also worked with Tip Top Builders on the home.) Off the kitchen, Adler added a butler's pantry and a scullery featuring an arched ceiling covered in mosaic tile. An artist painted the scullery's label onto the door's vintage glass. "These are all ideas that I've kept in my book of inspiration for so long," Adler says. "To have clients equally excited about them is a dream."

An oak and glass framed archway demarcates the kitchen from the breakfast area, which seats 12. "After school, the kids gather around the table to do homework or lounge on the window seat to read," Adler shares. The cushioned bench is an idyllic place to tuck into a book, but it's also where the designer added secret storage—essential for avoiding clutter in such a hardworking nook.

But the most magnificent example of hidden storage lies behind the walls of the formal dining room. Panels swing open to reveal drawers of silverware and shelves for china, for what some might consider the ultimate party trick. The designer's muse was the result of an impromptu trip to the Louvre. "My design director and I ended up getting lost not looking at the art, but looking at the architecture and the materials," she recalls. "And so this dining room was inspired by paneling that we saw that day—very pale blue with a tiny gilded trim." And thus another layer from the past was applied to the home.

Within the more private spaces, the same inventive spirit and attention to architecture is on display. At the center of the playroom (arguably the most fun room in the apartment) Adler installed a miniature two-story townhouse that looks as if it were plucked from a Georgian row in London. "There are working lights inside," Adler describes excitedly. "It's wallpapered with wood flooring, and they've got a little balcony and planter boxes." For the grownups, there's a primary bath clad in traditional moldings and accented with sculptural marble. And both the husband and wife's dressing rooms feel more like clothing boutiques than closets.

It's as if Adler has siphoned the family's dreams, spinning them into pleated silk, gilt, and crystal. But the designer shares credit with her clients. "Their relationship is very dear to me. It's such a collaboration," she says. "There's a shorthand to working with them for so long." Still, the home's transformation reads a bit like a Cinderella story, where Adler is the fairy godmother of high design.



Art: © Issy Wood

1/17

Blue is a common thread, used like a neutral throughout the apartment. "If I give her a choice, it's always blue," Adler jokes about her client's favorite color. In the living room, a royal blue custom wool rug by [The Rug Company](#) and baby blue plaster walls play off of each other like sea and sky. The sofa is Adler's own custom design, while the 18th-century console table and wrought-iron and leather seats are from [1stDibs](#).



2/17

“We really didn’t want it to feel one-note,” the designer explains of the clever mix of eras and styles. The antique daybed and vintage brass floor lamp in front of the living room window are both from [1stDibs](#).



3/17

Adler designed the kitchen in collaboration with [Northworks Architects](#) and [O'Brien Harris](#). The antique hanging lanterns above the island were sourced from Jamb. “Most of the lighting we installed was vintage or antique,” the designer notes.



Art: Cory Arcangel

4/17

In the breakfast area, classic, durable French bistro chairs circle a Victorian mahogany dining table for a family-friendly gathering space. The ceiling light fixture is by Foundry, with custom shades.



5/17

At the center of the scullery is a showstopping apron front sink in burnished brass from [Officine Gullo](#). The vintage pendant by Sergio Mazza was sourced from [1stDibs](#), and the plumbing and tile is by [Waterworks](#).



6/17

In the dining room, Adler repurposed the glass table and midcentury armchairs by Marco Zanuso, which she had procured for a previous home of the clients. The designer began working with the homeowners when they were newlyweds outfitting their first apartment together.



7/17

The library presented an opportunity for Adler to design something special for the husband. “We designed a men’s lounge with oak paneling and that amazing plaster detail ceiling,” she explains. The upholstery is all menswear fabrics, from herringbone to plaid. Now, she says, he has a dedicated spot to “watch the Super Bowl, invite friends over for drinks, or play backgammon.” The game table tucked in the corner doubles as a desk.



8/17

The powder room's striking chinoiserie wall covering is by [Watts](#). The gilt and crystal French sconces, French Louis XVI-style gilded mirror, and Italian fluted console-turned-vanity are all finds from [1stDibs](#) that infuse an Old World luxury.



The designer's starting point for the primary bedroom included the emerald headboard, geometric lamps, and midcentury bedside tables sourced by her client. A deep navy wall covering from Dedar cocoons the eclectic space.



10/17

Architectural elements abound in the primary bath. The vanity occupies an arched niche framed in traditional moldings, while the freestanding marble tub from [Urban Archeology](#) is

elevated by a sculptural stair.



11/17

Adler wanted her client's dressing room to be a place where she and her children could linger. A Louis XVI settee provides the perfect perch and an incredible view. The complementary Louis XVI tassel pulls from P.E. Guerin and custom lampshades by Adler are the ornamental elements that the designer enjoys layering in.



12/17

Adler leaned into the husband's collectible of choice—sneakers. Here, like in the library, furniture is upholstered in menswear fabric. However, this space has a more modern edge thanks to the vintage Cubist chandelier and tortoise shell wall covering by Cannon/Bullock.



13/17

The play room is arguably the most delightful area in the apartment. “It’s just so much fun to use that level of imagination to design a space,” Adler says. Its pièce de résistance is a custom two-story playhouse from [Lilliput Play Homes](#). The rug’s green and blue design suggests rolling hills and inset lakes, while the walls are covered in a [Zoffany](#) print that makes for a vibrant treescape. “The light fixtures are clouds and the ceiling is a sky blue,” the designer adds.



14/17

In the children's rooms, Adler opted for open storage. Here, custom shelving creates a snug spot for the trundle bed, designed by Adler, which is perfect for sleepovers. The plaid rug is from Patterson Flynn.



15/17

The boys' bathroom features vintage stainless steel sconces and an opaline glass pendant, while the plumbing fixtures and tile are from Waterworks.



16/17

It was important to Adler that the children's rooms grow with them. In one of the girl's rooms, a mix of toile upholstery and wall coverings, a patterned wool rug by Oscar Isberian, and custom ottomans covered in Scalamandré fabric offer a playful yet timeless approach.

17/17

In the adjoining bath, decorative molding and built-in bath surround lend character. The shower curtain was custom made with Pierre Frey fabric and the pleated silk chandelier is from 1stDibs.

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