

Trib

H O M E



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Silver shantung silk walls, a sleek crown-like chandelier and herringbone patterned floors give the foyer, opposite, a tailored version of the royal treatment.





Tailor made

WHEN DESIGNING A CONDO FOR A CLIENT
WHO DRESSES TO THE NINES,
JAMES DOLENC AND TOM RIKER KNEW INSPIRATION
COULD ONLY COME FROM THE CLOSET

BY LISA SKOLNIK PHOTOS BY BILL HOGAN



ames Dolenc and Tom Riker know

style chops when they see them. The partners in the Chicago interior design firm JamesThomas are known for their intense focus on aesthetic details. So when they met a striking, exquisitely attired New York transplant at a dinner party three years ago, they quickly came to the same conclusion about the newcomer: "Extraordinary taste," pronounces Riker.

"This was a man who had mastery of color, texture and nuance. And comportment. It was so clear from his sartorial choices and demeanor," says Dolenc. The designers speculated that his career as a top-level advertising executive had honed his discerning eye.

A year later, when the adman called out of the blue and asked them to design his new condominium, a two-bedroom aerie in the Trump Tower, they were flattered — and a little nervous. "We knew he would have exacting expectations," says Dolenc.

Their worries were needless. "He wanted to hire us for our taste and project management skills, and was a delegator," says Riker. "He just wanted it done. But it had to suit his taste and lifestyle."

"Masculine and handsome" were the adman's exact words to the team, along with a few conditions. Aesthetically, "he has an aversion to pattern but likes texture. Grays and blues were his hues of choice. And no gold. He's a silver guy," recalls Dolenc. On lifestyle, "he wanted to be able to entertain with ease," he adds.

Best of all, he was starting from scratch after selling his New York condo and all of its contents. His wardrobe and two paintings were the only possessions that made the move.

With no formal dictates, they took their cues from the

best source on their client's style: his closet. Channeling his sartorial splendor for direction, a pattern emerged: rich wools with herringbone or flannel weaves; fine white broadcloth shirts with French cuffs; and rich calf cordovan oxfords with matching belts. Occasionally, pinstripes and tweeds crept into the mix. But no flash or bold pattern. "He layers textures and hue, and the only hint of shine he ever sports comes from his silver cuff links," Dolenc notes.

The exercise left them with one overriding impression: Color and texture were important, but fit reigned supreme. "He always looked flawless. Nothing was ever creased, crumpled or out of place. Not even a stray lock of hair," says Dolenc.

Their observations fueled the design program, which "we tried to make as impeccably tailored as his wardrobe," Dolenc explains. Their working mantra was "sophisticated, buttoned-up and polished," he says.

As every well-dressed soul knows, underpinnings come first — and the designers were surprised by the quality and style of the apartment's millwork, finishes, fixtures and appliances. "It looked like Trump got everything at a fire sale," says Dolenc. "The residences didn't reflect the building's common areas."

Out went pre-finished cherry floors, poorly executed moldings, tacky kitchen cabinets and builder-grade lighting. All were replaced with thoughtfully selected options that played to the adman's likes.

A case in point is the wide plank oak flooring with a raised grain, stained honey and treated with a dove gray wash to provide subtle texture and establish the apartment's palette. In the foyer, it even got its own sartorial flourish when the designers gave it a herringbone inset. Custom baseboard and crown moldings throughout the apartment have dapper triple-cut profiles that pay homage to French seams, and the walls are painted varying shades of gray, the client's favorite color.

Quietly glamorous upholstered pieces were covered in cream or gray with intriguing surfaces, such as pebbled cottons and wools or velvety Ultrastuede and silks, while anything wood was lacquered or ebonized to almost-black bittersweet chocolate. That dash of pizzazz the adman achieved with his cuff links came from steel, gilt or chrome sconces, lamps, occasional tables, mirrors and trims on the furniture, such as elegant little squares of silver on the dining chair feet.

But too much of the same thing can get dull, so Dolenc and Riker stepped out of bounds ever so slightly in a few spots, to great effect. They drenched the foyer in silver shantung silk on the walls and silver tea paper on the ceiling, then capped it with a crownlike fixture, and made the study a deep, sexy blue that played to the views from the apartment at dusk. And "we snuck four patterned pillows into the living room," says Dolenc. Gray on gray, of course.

The designers' biggest confirmation that the condo was a perfect fit for the adman came when his two paintings finally arrived from New York. "We'd never seen them before, but we'd thought about where to install them and got it right," says Dolenc. One, a steamy bayou scene, holds court in the dining area, and the other anchors the dusky study.

Today, every time the designers visit the adman "nothing is ever out of place," points out Dolenc. Thanks to his designers' fine tailoring. ■



Floating shelves in the kitchen, made out of thick wenge wood planks, offer storage without adding bulk. Lower cabinets are lacquered a soft grey reminiscent of flannel pants. Hits of silver enliven the living room in the form of lighting and occasional tables, while a handful of pillows are the only nod to pattern.

