

CHICAGO

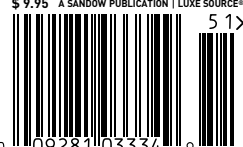
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PERSONAL TOUCH

OPEN SPACES AND UNIQUE ELEMENTS TRANSFORM A DESIGNER'S CHICAGO HOME INTO A SOPHISTICATED SETTING THAT'S PERFECT FOR ENTERTAINING.

WRITTEN BY ALEX RONAN PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICK JOHNSON

INTERIOR DESIGN Erik W. Kolacz, Contrast Design Group
BEDROOMS 4 | BATHROOMS 5 | SQUARE FEET 6,000



When designer Erik W. Kolacz serendipitously found the perfect Bucktown home—after just finishing an extensive renovation of their apartment in The Montgomery—he and his partner David Kroeger knew that the residence would need some work. However, its blank-canvas interiors ultimately won them over. “It was basically an unfinished white box that allowed me to design the home exactly how we wanted it,” Kolacz says. Adds Kroeger: “When I realized how many projects the house would require, I knew it would mean staying put for a while. I don’t like moving and Erik loves a good before-and-after, so it worked out perfectly.”

Known for his imaginative interiors and expert blending of pieces both old and new, Kolacz set out to revamp the space, starting with a sweeping renovation that included rebuilding the fourth floor and

For the living room of this Chicago home, designer and homeowner Erik W. Kolacz grouped together Joseph Jeup chairs from Holly Hunt in a Barbara Barry textile for Kravet, a daybed in an Edelman Leather material, and a custom sofa fabricated by Bolier. Artwork by Lonney White hangs above the fireplace, while a Lapchi rug runs underfoot. *Left:* Hats from Trilogy Antiques & Design in Michigan stand on pedestals in the entry.



An Alexandra Nechita painting adds color to the dining room. Holly Hunt head chairs and guest chairs from Andreu World America encircle a custom table. Fixtures from Lightology illuminate the scene, and a Christian Liaigre bench provides dimension. Colorful mouth-blown glass pieces from a street artist in Mexico adorn the upper wall.



An Ann Sacks backsplash makes a dramatic statement in the kitchen, where Kolacz designed dark custom cabinetry—wearing Top Knobs hardware—that contrasts with the island's white countertop from M S International, fabricated by Picture Stone. A light fixture made of vintage gelatin molds hovers above a built-in granite table and chairs from Brownstone Furniture.

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installing a new roof. Brand-new windows and doors throughout came next, as well as new electrical and some plumbing. Finally, the pool area was refurbished with a cascading waterfall and a black concrete finish to replace the old mosaic tile and a Koi pond was added.

The couple then spent some time living in the house to figure out how best to accommodate their lifestyles. It was during those months, for example, that they discovered the nook off the kitchen—which was intended for use as a breakfast area—would be best utilized for late-night lounging. “Whenever we have a party, people always gravitate toward that space,” Kolacz explains, “so we wanted an area conducive to entertaining.”

Kolacz also created a variety of outdoor areas, which offer the perfect environment for gatherings large and small. The couple have hosted two weddings and countless parties, and they have frequent visits from family and friends. “The house feels very West Coast to me,” says the designer. “It’s pretty unique.” To maximize the outdoor space,



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Kolacz designed a great room on the roof of the garage that overlooks the pool area. “The dark look of the pool is visually compelling and works really well with the interior color scheme,” he says.

Kolacz warmed up the modern interiors by introducing richly textured fabrics, patterned rugs, and wallpapers with subtle prints, incorporating the presence of orange in different measures to create cohesion among the rooms. “Orange is a color that both David and I gravitate toward,” Kolacz says. The vibrant hue surfaces as the home’s central accent color, appearing on throw pillows in the living room, an area rug in the study, and glass artwork in the dining room. Furthermore, Kolacz says, “In

During the kitchen renovation, Kolacz added a NanaWall system and Fleetwood sliding doors, both from Assured Corporation, to allow for a more fluid movement between the indoors and out. Inside, a seating area features a custom bench, Thom Filicia chairs, and a Holly Hunt table. Calacatta Chi marble surrounds the fireplace; a Chandra rug adds interest.



The home’s modern exterior includes blue-green tinted mineral-glass windows. Renaissance stone blocks made from a limestone composite, steel, glass, and aluminum framing all contribute in creating a West Coast vibe.

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all of my projects I try to reflect the personality of the owners—us in this case. With this home, for instance, I reclaimed a 130-year-old barn beam from a piece of property where my father and grandfather used to farm. I placed it over the living room fireplace, and I love that it reminds me of how hard they worked and pushes me to work just as hard.”

It’s a tribute to his firm’s name that Kolacz was able to blend the West Coast modern ethos inherent to the home with a dose of Chicago’s industrial history, all without sacrificing warmth or comfort. To achieve this look, Kolacz chose upholstered chairs in the open dining room to add softness and counterbalance the rift-cut oak, steel and glass staircase. In the kitchen, custom cabinetry and open shelving provide ample storage while showcasing decorative items that the couple have collected through the years. And, after installing new floor-to-ceiling windows in the bedrooms, Kolacz was inspired to paint the walls in a darker hue. “Since the rooms were getting so much natural illumination, I worried that a light paint color would make the rooms feel sterile,” he says. “Now, we get the most amazing light but it feels cozy, too.”



A lively rug from Holly Hunt is the focal point in the study. A custom sofa by Kolacz and Bright chairs, with seats covered in a Beacon Hill textile, mingle with a Vanguard Furniture coffee table. The Maya Romanoff wallcovering creates a dramatic backdrop for a mirror by Cyan Design; a Candice Olson chandelier for AF Lighting hangs above.



Kolacz covered the walls of the master bedroom in Benjamin Moore's Stormy Sky for a moody effect. A Christian Liaigre bed dressed in custom linens grounds the space, while sconces from Lightology shine light on custom nightstands fashioned with a Carrara marble top. The wood-framed chair was purchased at a Chairs for Charity event.



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To introduce a playful element, a fun rooftop addition creates an unexpected touch. "You can only have so many sectionals and grills before it gets boring," Kolacz says. So, the pair decided to utilize the excess roof space by creating a miniature golf course in collaboration with a private vendor from Florida.

The house may seem perfect, but according to Kolacz, it's not quite finished. "I'm a designer," he says, "so none of my personal homes will ever be complete." However, Kroeger is indeed happy with his partner's work. "This is the third home we've shared," Kroeger says. "Even if I can't initially grasp what Erik's ideas will look like upon completion, I trust him. He knows exactly how to mix comfort with style, and he's created a space that I'm grateful to come home to every day." **L**

The palette is serene in the master bathroom with an Ann Sacks limestone tile covering the floor and walls. A Duravit tub with a Kohler filler takes center stage. A Holly Hunt side table rests on a rug from Waterworks; towels draped over the tub are also from Waterworks.