

This Was Once Just a Basic Apartment...

But in the hands of a visionary designer, it became a jewel box in the middle of Chicago.



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There's no Oscar for best apartment makeover, but if there were, 1968's *Rosemary's Baby* would be our top contender. In it, the title character employs liberal amounts of white paint to transform a dour, wood-paneled (and possibly cursed) apartment in a storied Manhattan building into a bright haven for her and her new husband. It's basically the same narrative that designer Summer Thornton experienced in the Windy City—minus the whole devil's-baby thing.

Thornton lived through her own set of nightmares, though, the kind that come with a top-to-bottom apartment overhaul. **"Very brown and very dark" is how she describes her clients' original two-bedroom residence** in Chicago's Palmolive Building, a 1929 Art Deco landmark overlooking Lake Michigan. "When we first walked in, we couldn't help but wonder, Why would anyone buy this apartment?" she recalls.

But its owners—a retired couple with grown children who'd recently



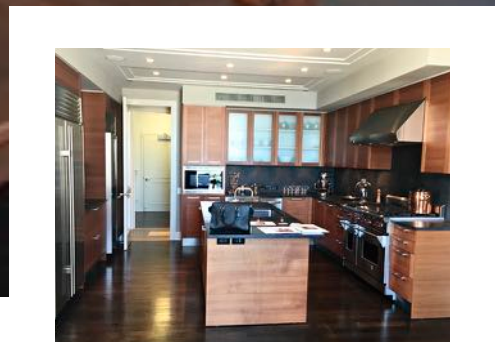
BEFORE

Interior Designer Summer Thornton Text Emma Bazilian Photographer Björn Wallander Producer Dayle Wood



Previous spread: A fresh coat of paint, Farrow & Ball's Blackened, provides a bright backdrop for high-shine accents, rich blue velvets, and warm wood tones in the living room. Sofa, chairs, and round library table, Baker. Settee, Ferrell Mittman. Cocktail table, Old Plank. Alabaster pendant light and brass side table, Vaughan.

Opposite: In the French brasserie-inspired kitchen, decorative brass grilles conceal HVAC vents. The designers converted the original can lights into hanging pendants by Waterworks. Range, La Cornue. Hood, RangeCraft. Kitchen island, Lagomorph Design. Tile, Cle Tile.



BEFORE

BEFORE



relocated from downstate Illinois—saw past the drab finishes and turned to Thornton, who had previously worked on two other residences in the building. “They knew it could be really spectacular,” says Jenny Holladay, Thornton’s codesigner on the project.

Taking their cues from the apartment’s Deco pedigree and the homeowners’ passion for antiques, Thornton and Holladay came up with a plan for a posh, 1920s-inspired space that would be sophisticated but not stiff. “The wife is very stylish and had always dreamed of having a glamorous home. Now that the kids were out of the house, this was her opportunity to achieve that,”

Holladay explains. “We wanted to give her a space that felt like a gem in the middle of the city.”

Their first order of business: lightening everything up. In the living room, after adding panel moldings to the walls—“a really easy, affordable upgrade,” says Thornton—they painted them a pale, misty gray. White cabinets, countertops, and glazed-brick tiles brought new life to the previously lackluster kitchen. And in the master bedroom, brown paint was traded for Quadrille’s Climbing Hydrangea wallcovering—one of Thornton’s all-time favorites—in beige and off-white tones. The windows face the lake, so privacy



Left: Floral walls, antique books, and a green-and-gilt chandelier make for a Bloomsbury-esque mix in the breakfast area. Wallcovering, Braquenié’s Le Grand Corail Toile Multicolore. Chandelier, Windsor House Antiques. Mirror, Lee Jofa. Mahogany table, ABC Carpet & Home.

Right: The bathroom floor's checkerboard Waterworks tile is echoed in the square millwork on the walls. Faucets and sconces, Waterworks. Mirrors, Oly.



was not a concern—which meant the designers could go with sheer Roman shades and curtains.

One of the apartment's most challenging spaces proved to be the master bathroom. "It was windowless and covered in dark beige marble," recalls Thornton, who installed cabinets painted in Farrow & Ball's Strong White, marble countertops and floors, and a pair of vintage-inspired mirrors over the vanity. The result is a room that feels like it actually has tons of natural light. "The reflective marble, the mirrors, the wall color—it was all about seeing how much light we could bounce around the room," the designer says.

More high-shine accents glitter throughout the apartment, from metallic wallpaper in a tucked-away bar to gilt lighting and open brass shelving in the kitchen. Rather than sticking to a single finish in each room, the designers mixed metals (think nickel light fixtures paired with brass hardware) to avoid a dated, matchy look, while heavier pieces of antique wood furniture ground all the glitz. To keep the muted color scheme from going cold, rich shades of blue pop up in almost every room.

When setting foot in the apartment now, it's practically unrecognizable—which is why, Thornton laughs, she made sure to print out some "before" photos to show the owners just how far it had come. "They wanted to be wowed," she says, "and I can honestly say they were!"



BEFORE

Opposite: Blue velvet from Bradley on a Century Furniture settee adds a cozy factor to the master bedroom. Chandelier, High Style Deco. Bed, David Sutherland. Rug and side table, RH, Restoration Hardware. Wallcovering, Quadrille. For more details, see Resources.

BEFORE

