





# *moderne moment*

IN A POST-WAR GRAMERCY APARTMENT, AN ART DECO DEVOTEE WORKS WITH HIS LONGTIME DESIGNER TO CREATE A HOME REMINISCENT OF THE ROARING TWENTIES.

WRITTEN BY **LEILANI MARIE LABONG** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **FRANCIS SMITH**

INTERIOR DESIGN Norman McCrary, N.Mak Interior Design

ARCHITECTURE Ann Macklin, A2 Architect, PC

HOME BUILDER Andrew Mullins, Philip Andrews LLC

BEDROOMS 1 | BATHROOMS 2 | SQUARE FEET 1,450



In the formal dining room, the texture of S. Harris' Exotic Croc velvet on the chairs and the patterned draperies made of Bergamo's Goya fabric create a luxurious effect. The juxtaposition between the glass-topped Paul Evans table and a vintage James Mont sideboard provides an unusual contrast in the space.



As a child visiting Radio City Music Hall for the first time, Howard Williams found himself instantly enamored by architect Donald Deskey's Art Deco masterpiece. "To me, it epitomized all the glamour and excitement of New York City," says Williams. Decades later, Williams is now the proud owner of High Style Deco, a gallery he opened in 2004 selling furniture, lighting, art and accessories from his favorite time period. Coincidentally, his apartment in Gramercy, once inhabited by a star of the Ziegfeld Follies, is just as ritzy.

After working with designer Norman McCrary on two previous apartments, Williams didn't think twice about contacting him when he made the move to his third apartment in the city. And though both homeowner and designer saw the Art Deco movement as one of the most dazzling design periods in history, they recognized that like many things that tend to be showstoppers, a little editing goes a long way. "To paraphrase Coco Chanel, no outfit is complete without first taking off one piece of jewelry," says McCrary.

Before McCrary could truly start, an architectural "tightening" was in order. Helmed by Ann Macklin, the gut renovation cured the Gramercy apartment of a dreadful case of neglect: scuffed vinyl floors, dated Formica cabinets and stagnant, closed-off spaces. Once it was McCrary's turn in the apartment, he stopped at nothing to capture the "wow factor" his client was hoping for.



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"We decided to go mod and sexy for this apartment," McCrary explains. Amber lighting casts a warm glow in nearly every nook and cranny, and the seating's graceful curvy lines invite guests to linger. Elsewhere in the apartment, McCrary's vision shows up in the architectural details, including a monumental slab of sleek onyx that transforms a fireplace surround into an elegant statement piece, as well as concave columns in the living room that are finished with a rich ombre design. In the foyer, an impressive granite-mica wallcovering by Phillip Jeffries tows the line between grit and glam. Describing the dynamic interplay between these unique elements, McCrary notes, "There's a fluidity to the shapes which enables the eye to move effortlessly around the room, stopping to enjoy the art or the sculptural quality of the lighting. The larger architectural elements, provide a calm place for the eye to rest."

The kitchen features a tile backsplash and tile flooring by Artistic Tile in cool neutral tones, paired with a Sub-Zero refrigerator, Bertazzoni oven, and cabinetry by MCKB. To keep the space from feeling one-note, designer Norman McCrary added warm brass counter stools by EG Cody clad in a racy lizard vinyl for good measure.



Fit for a meeting or a casual meal, the living room's center seating area features a Karl Springer lacquered goat-skin pedestal table surrounded by leather-covered 1950s Billy Haines game chairs atop a Kyle Bunting hide rug. A vintage Poliarie chandelier adds movement and sparkle to the otherwise black-and-white vignette.



Adjacent to the living room's fireplace, a Vladimir Kagan Erica chaise and Yin and Yang ottomans serve as a smooth contrast to Brutalist-style Polarte sconces and a Louise Nevelson sculpture called *The Dark Eclipse*. The painting is also by Louise Nevelson and is entitled *Girl with Cat*.



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Some edits were necessitated by the building's 80-year-old architectonics. For instance, the mere thought of laying beautiful white-glass tile floors in the foyer and kitchen required the advice of a structural engineer, who ultimately axed the plan to continue the tile installation throughout the dining room. Builder Andrew Mullins seized the opportunity to turn this kink into a green affair. "We placed a soundproofing product made of recycled tires under the tile floors and refinished the existing oak floors in the dining room instead of putting in entirely new flooring," he says.

For other, more festive, reasons, the dining room is especially important to the homeowner, who decided to turn an existing second bedroom into an alluring space where he could, for example, fête his parents' 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary with friends and family, as he did last fall. Although the golden Venini chandeliers, epic black-lacquer sideboard and croc-patterned chairs create a rich alchemy that seems more befitting of monumental celebrations than Chinese take-out for one, Williams insists that the room is intended for daily use. "I grew up in a house where we used certain rooms only on special occasions," he says. "This place is too beautiful not to be lived in every single day." **L**