

Neutral Territory

The discovery of a stored-away art collection helps a colorful interior designer and her more conservative client come to a successful detente.

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New walnut cabinetry and granite countertops transformed the formerly unremarkable kitchen into the centerpiece of the main living areas. "It had no style and the layout was very amateurish," designer Eva Quateman says. "We convinced him that it could look so much better."







Pops of orange play off of the artwork and add interest to the neutral, tweed-covered sofa in the great room. Opposite page: In the master bedroom, a velvet-covered chair has been paired with an elegant side table from Quateman's furniture collection for deAurora.

Even the most conservative clients have a bit of flair when you dig deep enough—at least that's what interior designer Eva Quateman (evaquateman.com) discovered when a bachelor in finance hired her to renovate his three-bedroom apartment in River North. Tasked with creating a masculine, neutral dwelling, Quateman—a color enthusiast—was thrilled to find a cache of vibrant artwork that her client had inexplicably hidden away in storage. "I said, 'Let's put them up all over,'" she explains. "That's our color, our pop."

"Her usual work is a little different, so it was a leap of faith, but I believed in her," says the owner, who also took a chance on Q Construction, Eva's husband Gary Quateman's firm. The massive renovation touched nearly every surface throughout. "It was pretty ugly," the owner explains of its red wall-to-wall carpeting and awkwardly placed wall niches.

Those oddities are just a memory in the updated space. In the living room, for example, a new custom "art moderne" fireplace creates a handsome focal point for a modern sofa covered in a neutral, durable tweed fabric and a pair of leather



A tufted leather headboard and a mod bench carry the subdued vibe into the master suite. "I might have added more accessories or a little more color," says Quateman, "but he wanted it to feel calm and masculine." Opposite page: With the help of Q Construction, Quateman overhauled the master bathroom, cladding the walls with porcelain tile and replacing the floor with limestone.



and wood chairs. Floor-to-ceiling draperies with a horizontal stripe introduce pattern and sheen. "He didn't want to do drapes, but I thought they would soften the room, and you can't get more masculine than taupe, brown and beige," Quateman says.

The space is open to the dining area and kitchen, which has been outfitted with custom walnut cabinetry to the ceiling, a new island with a pair of leather-clad stools and a graphic granite countertop and backsplash. "He loved it, and that was a pleasant surprise," she explains of the bold selection.

Across the hall, pocket doors open to the

office—a cozy space furnished simply with a desk from Room & Board and a custom couch. The importance of the details exemplifies the approach that Quateman employed throughout the interior. "The desk accessories are probably more expensive than the table itself," she says. "There's a little of that in every room."

The designer reused the black granite vanity in the powder room, for example, elevating the look with a metallic grass cloth wall covering that she admits was a hard sell for her conservative client. She took a more muted approach in the master bedroom, which she furnished with a simple upholstered tufted leather bed flanked by

open side tables and glass lamps.

The transformation of the en suite bathroom is perhaps the most dramatic. The massive space has been completely gutted and outfitted with limestone flooring, porcelain wall tile and a sculptural soaker tub placed alongside the massive standalone shower.

Needless to say, the space is a big hit with the owner. "I'm big on comfort, so I wanted it to be very livable, and it is," he says, noting that everybody who walks through the door is "blown away" by the transformation. "I don't even really notice how nice it is anymore, but I know how comfortable I am. Eva really nailed it." ■