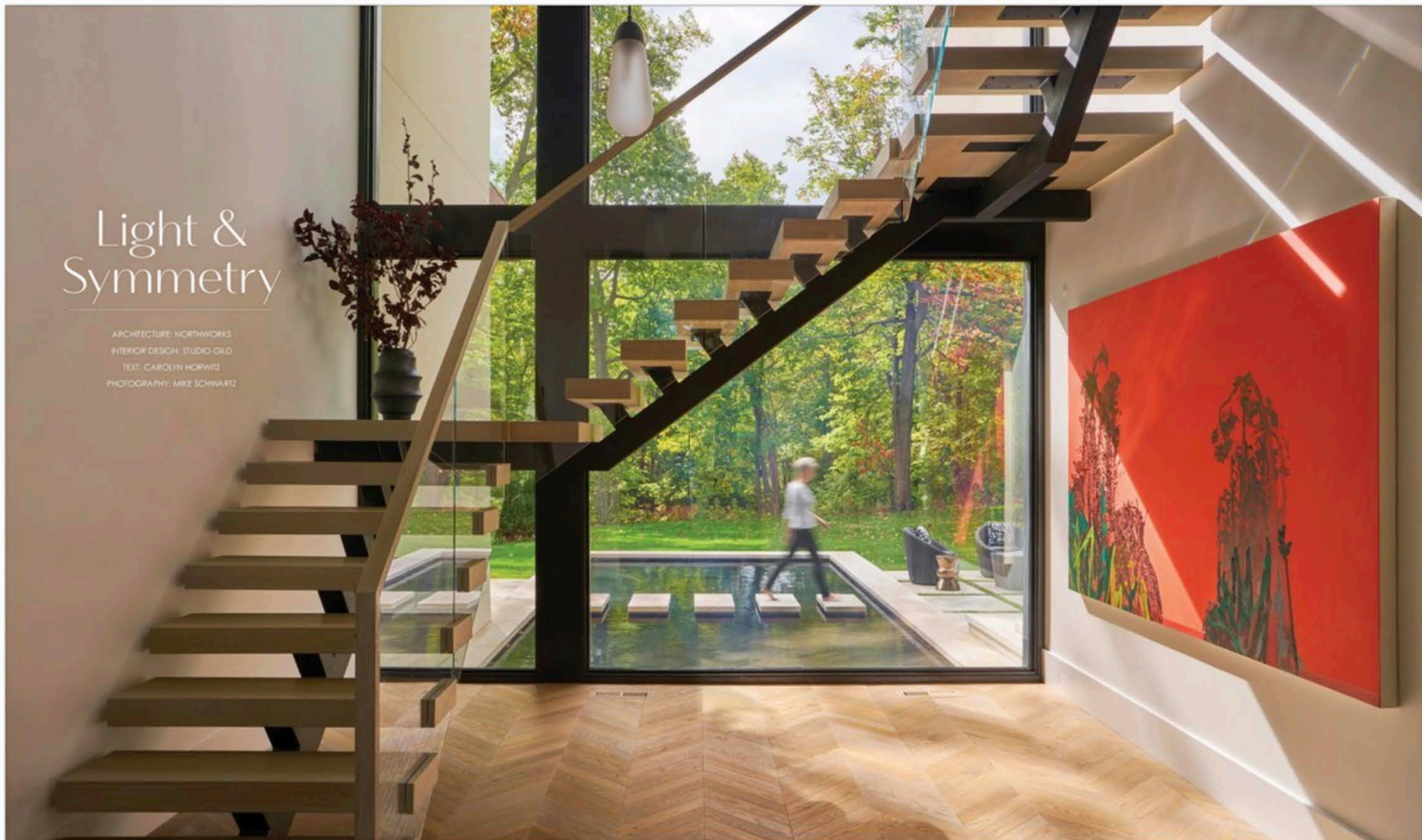


Light & Symmetry

ARCHITECTURE: NORTHWORKS
INTERIOR DESIGN: STUDIO GILD
TEXT: CAROLYN HORWITZ
PHOTOGRAPHY: MIKE SCHWARTZ



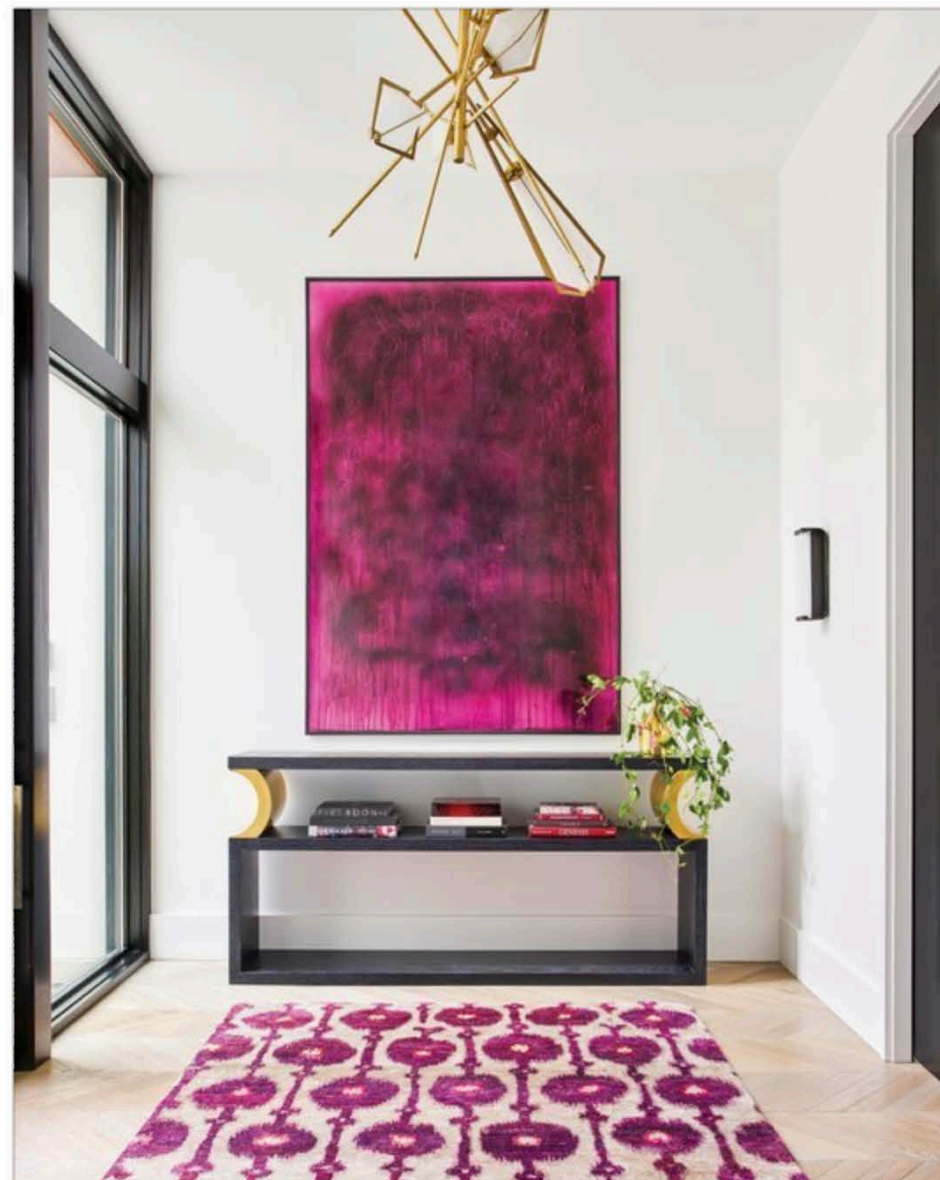
There's a certain harmony that can be achieved in a building when the architect and interior designer join forces from the outset. For a family in Highland Park, Illinois, a fully integrated collaborative approach resulted in a residence that satisfied their brief for a structure that was modern but not cold, edgy but family-friendly, neutral in palette but bold.

Interior design firm Studio Gild and Northworks Architects + Planners, both based in Chicago, partnered at the schematic stage to satisfy the needs of their clients. In doing so, they created a cohesive structure in which the exterior architecture carries through to the interior details, and the spaces carved out within the home are imbued with a human element and display an integral connection to the objects and finishes they contain.

"The intent was to make the house as simple and quiet as possible so that it didn't disrupt the beauty of everything you see in the ravine," Austin DeFree, partner in Northworks and the lead architect on the project, says of the home's heavily wooded natural setting. "And obviously, working with Studio Gild and their fantastic artwork and furniture that they purchased, I feel like the house was just a vessel for these beautiful objects."

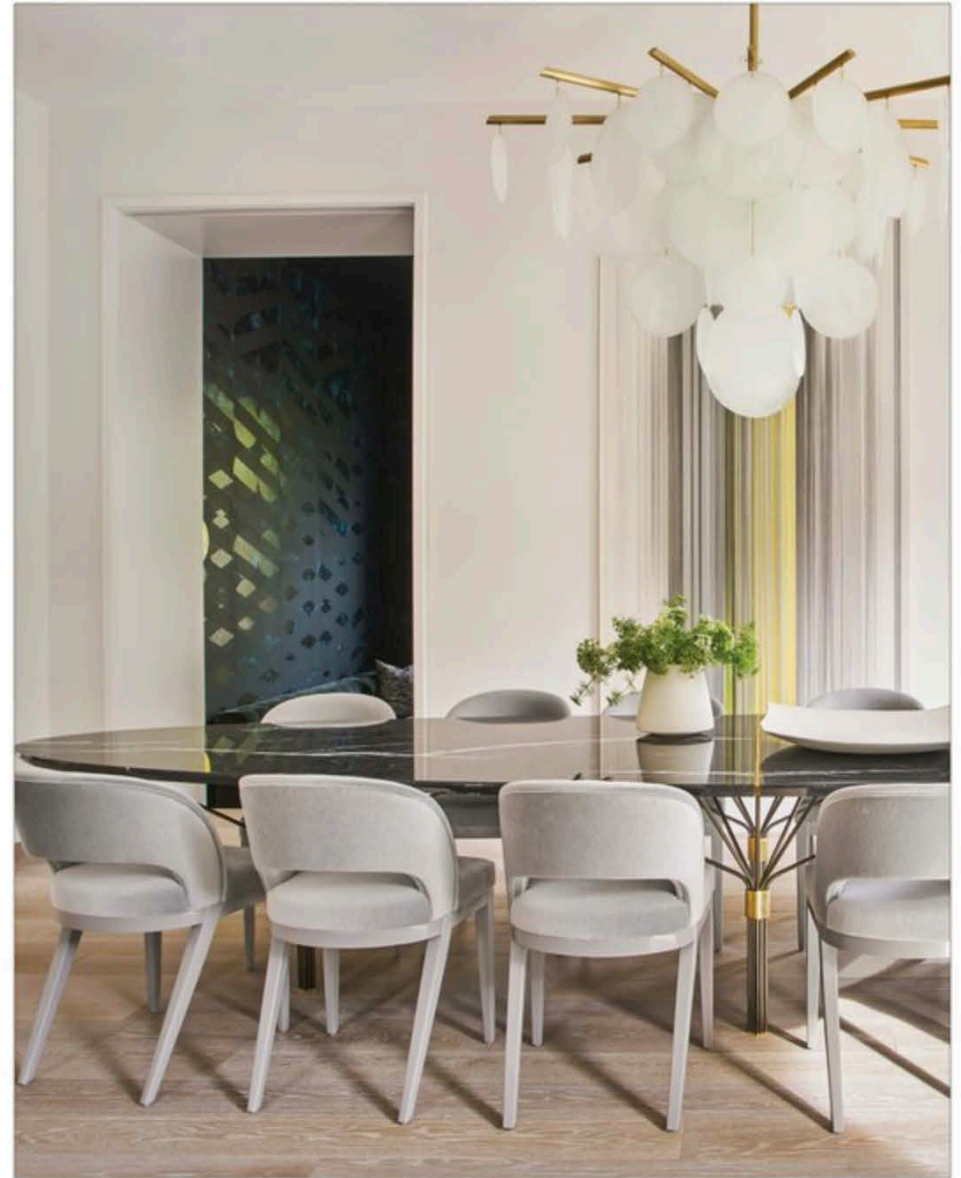
It's more than that, though. Clad in a combination of stucco, limestone and ipe hardwood, the 6,500-square-foot structure comprises three main folded volumes. Inside, private and public spaces are separated by what may be the home's most powerful statement: a central entry axis containing a floating, sculptural staircase. Here as in the rest of the house, Studio Gild, led by principal Jennie Bishop, collaborated with the architects to design high-contrast dark millwork and oak chevron floors, which ground the massive space with smaller-scale detail. Whitney Bedford's painting *The I Do—I Will* brings further intensity to the entry sequence, which continues visually through a floor-to-ceiling window wall to a reflecting pond and the ravine beyond.

Art selection played a crucial role throughout the house, livening the neutral palette. Studio Gild mentored the clients, a young couple starting their collection, identifying possible art "moments" in the completed interior design and bringing in works for consideration. For example, in the foyer, already brightened by a violet sari silk rug from Lee Jofa, the team placed Edward Lipksi's *Mystical Vandalism XI*, made from custom car paint on mirrored Perspex. "She was not convinced when we saw this in the gallery," Bishop says of the client. "We had it brought out as a trial and hung it, and she was like, 'One hundred percent it's staying here.'"









Lighting adds another dimension of drama. "It's the jewelry that you put on after your outfit," Bishop says. "You have to get completely dressed to understand what jewelry you're putting on, but that makes it or breaks it." At the entry to the master suite, Teardrop and Aquafresh sconces from Jason Miller's Odds & Ends series for Roll & Hill surround and accentuate the shapes in Billy Kidd's photograph Heather 2883. For illumination in the kitchen, Bishop says, "we needed something organic in a very rectilinear space." The seedpod shapes of Rich Brilliant Willing's Gala chandelier soften the effect of the custom matte lacquer cabinetry and Avenue Metal Co.'s brass hood surround. Leather-wrapped Caribou counter stools from Ochre, found at David Sutherland, add warmth.

In the dining room, a Nimbus chandelier is large enough to address the 14-foot custom elliptical table from Chicago's Pensare Group while remaining cloudlike and ethereal. It's beautiful even when turned off, Bishop notes, "a sculpture within the space." Juxtaposed with the circular light fixture, the rigid strokes of Anne Lindberg's pencil drawing unfold 03 create tension.

There, as in most public portions of the house, Bishop says, "everything is light and airy and gallery-white to let art pop." In what the residents call the Scotch room, however, the team strove for a "cozier, womblike, dramatic" feel. Here alone, artwork was forsaken in favor of dark, moody wall coverings from Flat Vernacular. The pattern adds visual interest and, along with the wall-hugging Planet sconce from Please Wait to Be Seated, helps ground the room, which is not large but has high ceilings. A custom tufted sectional covered in a fabric from Kerry Joyce that catches the limited light.

Indeed, the extreme verticality of the architecture presented challenges in smaller spaces such as bathrooms. The formal powder room is long and narrow but has the same nearly 12-foot ceilings as the rest of the main floor. "Dealing with height in a huge space is not that big of a deal, because you feel that the whole room is overscale," Bishop says. "But when you start to squeeze the sides, it accentuates the height and can sometimes feel really off." To counteract that vertiginous quality, Studio Gild ran a custom ceiling light the entire length of the powder room. Similar methods were employed in other bathrooms: in the family powder room, a custom oversize round mirror over the vanity reflects the Schumacher wallpaper and rips in at the appropriate height to bring everything down to a human scale.

While clearly strategic, such decisions feel destined, rather than forced, when they're considered from the initial design stages. "As we were defining all these spaces, Studio Gild really helped talk about the human element in our discussions," says architect DeFree, adding that detailed 3D modeling and renderings complete with furniture and finishes helped to elucidate their combined vision early on. "It's definitely a richer conversation when you have an owner, architect and interior designer from day one." ■ Northworks.nwks.com; StudioGild.studiogild.com

