





LAKE EFFECT

A Chicago hotelier puts five-star design moves (and three different designers) to the ultimate test: to take his sprawling penthouse of a family pad into the next dimension

BY LISA CREGAN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY TONY SOLURI

This prominent Chicago hotelier doesn't run any Motel 6s (his rooms run a bit more upscale), but he'll still leave a light on for you. And not some 40-watt Sylvania either. Instead, look out for an astonishing seven-foot-round chandelier shaped like a swarm of butterflies that he and his wife commissioned for the turret of their new Lake Shore Drive penthouse. The blown-glass wings of the butterflies hang from fiber optic threads whose ends glow when the fixture is turned on, and even their designer, Lisa Simeone, whose firm helped create the confection, seems a bit astonished by the effect. "I think you can see it from space," she says.

The trifecta of designers who worked on the penthouse—Simeone and her partner Gina Deary of the Simeone Deary Design Group, as well as their associate Ami Kahalekulu—say these clients were a designer's dream. No matter how adventurous an idea they proposed, the homeowners asked for more. Take that butterfly chandelier: It can also change colors. "I was having dinner at NoMi," says Deary, "and I looked out and saw the apartment's turret suddenly change to blue." Apparently, rather than hanging out some little "W" banner for a Cubs win, the homeowners

decided they'd light up the skyline.

Heart-stopping vistas and wraparound terraces weren't dramatic enough for this couple and their three teenage children. They challenged Simeone Deary to come up with ideas "even more spectacular than the view" from their 7,500-square-foot apartment. Given the breathtaking panorama of wind-ruffled lake, Navy Pier Ferris wheel and twinkling Loop nightscape, the bar was set pretty high.

This is one design team that was uniquely qualified to oblige. Simeone Deary is a six-year-old interior architecture firm, specializing in bold, celebratory spaces for hotels, clubs and restaurants. They currently have more than 70 hotel projects in the works, including the much-anticipated Elysian (now rising above Walton Street), which will be home to two Charlie Trotter restaurants—also designed by Simone Deary.

So it stands to reason they would be the go-to design group for a hotel guy looking to create his own celebratory space, with rooms to suit every family member's whirling social schedule. There's a game room for the kids—offering everything from pinball to Xbox—fitted out by a gaming consultant, a Boffi kitchen that can disappear behind sliding wood panels to hide a caterer's mess, and the entertaining *pièce de résistance*, a fully tricked-out bar with, count 'em, three flat-screen TVs disguised behind one-way mirrors.

No room shouts "party" though like the one inside the circular turret, where low-slung leather sectionals allow unobstructed sight lines to the

In the living room, designer Simeone Deary created the rug to look like a pebble dropped in water, rippling out to the edges of the room. The floor was raised nine inches, and a mechanical turntable can slowly rotate the room. Edged in white onyx, backlit by fiber optics, this room feels like it's floating in space at night.



incredible views. The room's butterfly chandelier isn't even its most outrageous feature. "They wanted something off-the-wall," says Simeone, so she and her team came up with an idea so wondrous it might have come from a child's crayoned dream house. They put the whole room on a turntable. "It does one full rotation every hour," reports Simeone, still sounding a bit incredulous 10 months after installation. "Let's say you're facing inside when the Navy Pier fireworks start going off. Before you know it, you're looking out at the show." She confesses that once the clients signed off on the idea the

designers were concerned about the engineering details. That turned out to be the easy part compared to reassuring the neighbors. "They thought we might cause the whole turret to spin off its axis," laughs Kahalekulu.

Engineering challenges didn't end there though. The designers also created a spectacular see-through wine room that occupies the central crossroads of the apartment. "We were thinking about how much his wine collection means to our client," says Simeone. "That's why it's the heart of the house." Bottles behind the glass walls of the 'cellar' are held in place by silver wires so fine

Above: In the master bedroom, Simeone Deary used shades of cream in different textures for serenity. Walls are upholstered in silk and the headboard was done in ivory leather. *Opposite page:* Bookmatched for seamlessness, the exotic Burma teak marble wall at the elevator entry showcases a fireplace that's fronted by an optional "water curtain." Fire and water can be on separately or simultaneously.

A wall of Burma teak marble that resembles petrified wood is a totally unexpected combination fireplace/waterfall—a welcome mat that tips off visitors that they may not be in Kansas anymore (or Colorado or Illinois for that matter).





they create the illusion that the wine is floating in space. "I had to do a few mock-ups to make sure everything wouldn't come crashing down," admits Kahalekulu. "It all connects back to the owner being a hotelier," says Simeone. "Hotel design is about giving customers bold statements that act as cues—telling them what a certain area is all about."

"Bold statements" is a good way to sum up the attitude here. The apartment is a collection of exclamation points written on a resolutely blank sheet. There are no door headers or hardware visible anywhere. "A door could be a wall, a wall could be a door," says Simeone. She says the homeowner loves to tell them how, even with directions, his guests often can't find the powder room. For flooring, Simeone Deary dictated wide planks of buttery white reclaimed

oak that run down hallways sheathed in off-white lacquer ("no brushstrokes to break up the lines," explains Simeone). The interior walls are covered in seamless wood panels—Japanese Sen wood in the public areas and dark exotic Wenge in the bedrooms—that highlight the apartment's sculptural furnishings. Simeone says they chose quieter finishes for the walls and floors so the interiors wouldn't "overwhelm the family's personality."

Not that there was much chance of that happening with this gregarious gang. Dashes of the owners' personalities are everywhere. The office, a cocoon of chocolate-brown suede walls and deep, dark leather floor, features an enormous map the designers dreamt up so this globe-trotting family could use pushpins to mark the places they've





above: Boffi cabinets in the kitchen area are embellished with Calcutta gold marble, and the floors are done in a herringbone pattern to impart warmth. Table from Hudson Furniture. *Opposite page, left:* In the foyer, soft Japanese sen wood walls and an airy nest-like table emphasize the extraordinary views. *Opposite page, top:* This enormous Clifford Ross photograph, which reminds the owners of their home state (Colorado), was too large to fit in the building's elevator and was brought up dangling from the bottom of the elevator car.

traveled (lots). And in the elevator entry hall there's a spectacular nod to their previous home in Colorado. Cut into a wall of Burma Teak marble that resembles petrified wood is a totally unexpected combination fireplace/waterfall—a welcome mat that tips off visitors that they may not be in Kansas anymore (or Colorado or Illinois for that matter). Designed to provide either winter or summer interest, the family can also choose to turn on both

fire and water at once should they prefer their classical elements simultaneous. Simeone's personal preference is the waterfall. She says she can hear its trickle all through the apartment when it's on. "You feel connected to the ground, to the lake and landscape."

Connected to the ground in this place? Not hardly. This is one high-rise apartment that has "slipped the surly bonds of earth." Well, maybe not earth, but certainly of home design. ■