



A coffered ceiling and intricate moldings give this new-construction apartment the air of a gracious pre-war home. The 1930s Swedish armchairs are from homeowner Marilyn Vogel's showroom, V Amsterdam.



BALANCING ACT

In a spacious River North condominium, the whole is even more elegant than its well-considered parts

by **Lisa Cregan**
photography by **Alan Shortall**

"This little hallway is beautiful to my eye," says Vogel of the passageway leading to her kitchen. "That 1950s American bench is so pleasing with its little notch on top. Then there's the French chair beyond, one of my favorite finds—it's like a little person." **OPPOSITE** In the library, Vogel says she "stayed light" with the upholstery to balance the heaviness of the wood, but she brought in some "fire colors," too—a bronze standing lamp, books with red bindings, a turquoise Pharaoh.



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ARILYN VOGEL, OWNER OF CHICAGO'S V AMSTERDAM, a high-end antiques shop specializing in 20th-century pieces, has given the concept of balance a lot of thought.

"Human beings are far more comfortable in a balanced environment where scale, shape, and materials are in harmony," she says, explaining how she created deep comfort in her 3,600-square-foot River North condominium. Spend just five minutes in Vogel's home, where every object's proportion has been carefully studied and where functional elements are as worthy of your undivided attention as any work of art, and you'll become a believer, too.

Though this is a newly constructed building with a loft dynamic outside, the apartment has intricate ceilings and moldings that lend the place the air of a gracious pre-war beauty. But rather than using elaborate fabrics and patterns to play up that atmosphere, Vogel chose a worldly array of furniture and personal *objets* of different styles and periods to establish the mood. She says she has fiddled with and refined her home "until every space looks special in its own way."

Even the apartment's broad hallways are dressed with well-placed benches, antique consoles, and upholstered ottomans. It's a bit of visual trickery that transforms passing-through spaces into glorious galleries.

The dining room's mid-century console with an oversized gilt shell for a base is another cheeky ruse. Vogel has placed it so that its luster and shine pull the eye away from the bulk of the gleaming baby grand piano. "I needed to balance that large black shape with softer elements," she says. Not that the instrument is some tchotchke-attracting prop; Vogel is a former college music major who plays piano to relax.

Color and scale are always part of the equation. In the bedroom, full-length mirrors flank the headboard to balance high ceilings. In the library, Vogel leads the viewer's eye around the room by balancing a blue throw pillow on a taupe chair with a turquoise bust of a Pharaoh high atop the bookcase.

"A lot of people stare at an empty space and try to draw a floor plan, but I'm not a traditional designer," says Vogel. "I basically find beautiful objects, and then I present them. I've done that all my life."

Resources: See Buy Guide, page 86.





With its baby grand piano and comfortable seating, the dining room functions as a gathering place. A 1940s cased glass lamp on the piano provides a surprising dash of color.



"The bedroom is a very large, tall space. Small ottomans and slipper chairs are nice fillers," Vogel says. Soft colors and layers of texture in the draperies and other furnishings make the space inviting.





DETAILS So how does a home so rigorously balanced feel relaxed and spontaneous? For one thing, Vogel isn't hiding any lights under bushel baskets. She admits to using upward of 35 vintage table and floor lamps, pendants, and sconces to add color and modernity—as well as rich illumination—to her home. Note the spark of wit introduced by the marble and acrylic lamp atop an otherwise formidable early 18th-century William & Mary chest (below, left) and the contemporary curve ball thrown by the 1970s tiger-motif lamp on the library's serious Biedermeier

table (above, right). "Lamps are so important to me," says Vogel, who reports that she used 85 of them when she outfitted her former Gold Coast home. She thinks pulling in a reflective piece like the Italian glass lamp on her bedroom table (below, center) adds so much interest that color becomes superfluous. And Vogel sees reflections and echoes everywhere. On her bookshelves (below, right), "spherical shapes repeat and the shapes of the vases reflect each other. Then the oil painting grounds the whole scheme."

