

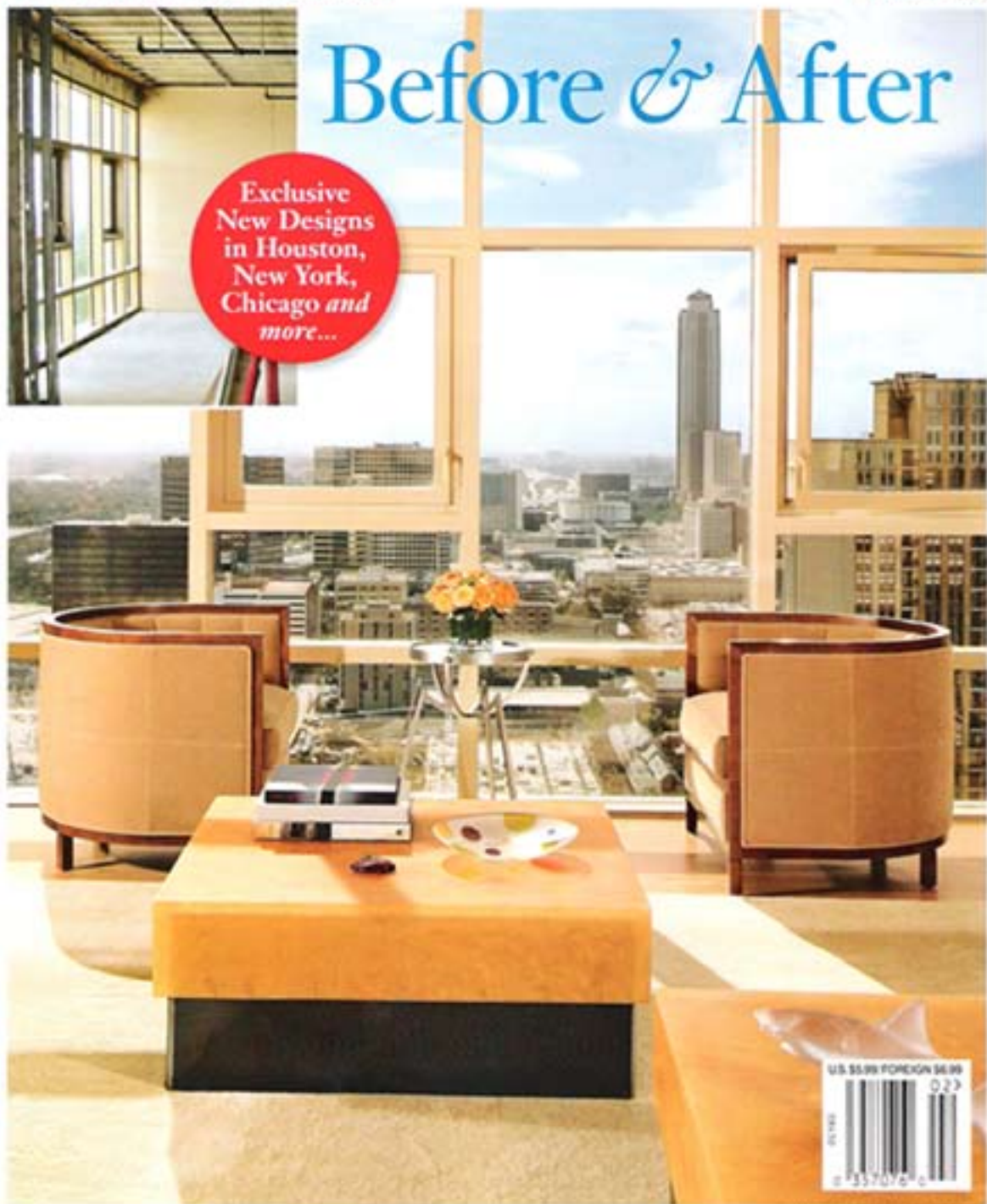
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with an open staircase on one side and a new, spacious porch on the other. At the rear was a two-story addition—virtually invisible from the street and so permitted under landmark regulations—with a comfortable master suite on the second floor, a state-of-the-art kitchen and garage on the first and, beneath the garage, a wine cellar.

In finishing and furnishing these spaces, Gomez says, she wanted “to suggest the past, not duplicate it.” Against a light, youthful palette of creams and neutrals, she placed an eclectic selection of pieces sympathetic to the family lifestyle and casual entertaining the owners envisioned. She also encouraged them to acquire a small collection of carefully chosen contemporary art that underscores the freshness and ease of the interiors.

Despite city restrictions placing limits on the types of alterations that could be made to the historic structure, the team was able to add a master bedroom (above) and bath (right). Throughout, the palette was “kept light to visually enlarge the space,” the designer explains.

Finally, four years after they saw the (formerly) blue house, the owners moved in—and they can’t imagine doing anything differently. “We have the best of everything,” says the husband. “A historic, supremely comfortable and livable house, on a beautiful block, in the middle of the most wonderful city. We love living in Chicago.” Seemingly, the city feels the same about them: Last September they received a preservation award from the Commission of Chicago Landmarks. The love story had a happy ending. □





The Best of Everything

AN 1884 HOUSE IN CHICAGO GETS A SECOND LEASE ON LIFE

Renovation Architecture by
William Massey, AIA
Interior Design by
Mariette Himes Gomez, ASID
Text by Amanda Vaill
After Photography by
Tony Soluri

This is a love story about two people and a city. A young couple—a wine importer and his wife—had found property in Chicago's northern suburbs and were about to build a new house for their children and themselves. "Then," says the husband, "we woke up one morning and asked ourselves, 'What on earth are we doing?' We loved Chicago, our kids had just gotten into a wonderful school downtown—why were we moving to the suburbs?"

Putting their property on the market, they began searching for houses in the city. They found nothing until, walking down the street near their children's school, they saw a blue Queen Anne house with a colonnaded porch and stained-glass windows. It was unoccupied, some of its porch columns had lost their Ionic capitals, and it was surrounded by an ugly fence with a Beware of Dog sign nailed to it; but it was a historic house on a landmark street, a block from Lake Michigan. The couple knew at once they had to have it.

"It reminded me of houses in small towns in Kansas, where I'm from," he says. "It had char-



acter." It also had mold and rot, and it had been infested by carpenter ants. "We knew right away we would have to gut it." They would also have to strip away the aluminum siding, tear off a rickety 1940s side porch and demolish a kitchen wing crammed full of Formica and flimsy pine cabinetry. They would have to carve out another floor's worth of usable space for additional bedrooms and baths. And they would have to do all

this while seeking approval every step of the way from Chicago's landmarks commission.

Undeterred, they plunged in, enlisting the Chicago architect William Massey and Manhattan-based but Michigan-born designer Mariette Himes Gomez to help them. A contemporary-minded classicist, Gomez was "thrilled" to be a part of this project. "Any time I get to work in the Midwest, I jump at the chance," she

"Update a house without tearing it down—what a concept!" designer Mariette Himes Gomez says of the brief given to her and architect William Massey by the owners of an 1884 residence in Chicago. **TOP LEFT:** During the renovation, the original cedar shingles were discovered and reproduced (above). **OPPOSITE:** A mixed-media work by Linda Micko Allen is in the living area.