



# Rise to the OCCASION

By Mauri Elbel Photography by Casey Dunn

*When two former oil industry executives were in the midst of renovating a large historic estate in a gated neighborhood in Houston, they paused to ask themselves an important question: Why?*

*"They stopped and said to each other 'What are we doing?,'" recalls Marcus Mohon who had just finished designing the couple's beach house in Galveston. "They are empty nesters with grown children and have several homes so they travel quite a bit. They decided they did not want a whole estate to manage."*







**T**hey realized they didn't want the headache of having to hire a garden manager, a landscaper, a housekeeper — basically the full-time staff that would be required to maintain the property — so they made a drastic pivot.

"They moved into a glass box in the middle of Houston and completely switched gears," says Mohon whose design firm, Marcus Mohon Interiors, went from designing a massive historic project to a light-flooded urban high-rise overlooking the city.

With the mindset of traveling frequently, the glass-surrounded space located in a new Houston high-rise on the edge of River Oaks offered the kind of lock-and-leave lifestyle the couple was looking for. Although the spec unit the couple purchased was already halfway complete, Mohon reoriented the rooms to create a luxurious space that better suited their lifestyle and combined the building's contemporary design with rich décor and furnishings rooted in French modernism.







“We used a lot of French modernist details and married them with the style of the very contemporary building,” says Mohon. “We held hands across time by blending the antiques they had purchased for their estate with the style of the brand new high-rise.”

Throughout their expansive home, which covers half of a floor, a juxtaposition between new and old is at play. Mohon carefully curated each space by integrating the French antiques the couple had been collecting for their estate with the sleek architecture of the urban high-rise.

In the intimate lounge room, a shifted space that was originally the dining room, a mohair sofa custom designed by Marcus Mohon Interiors is paired with a vintage vellum covered coffee table, an antique rock crystal chandelier and contemporary bronze telescoping tables by David Sutherland. Deep brown leather chairs are reminiscent of those that existed in French smoking bars years ago, but Mohon arranged them with Swedish chairs covered in luxurious fabric. The bronze Jean de Mery sconces could be interpreted as both classic and modern.

“It’s all about geometry,” says Mohon. “As long as everything speaks the same language, pieces from different periods can live together.”

Although Mohon says the wife was a little doubtful about the beguiling, seductive lounge space, it’s one of Mohon’s favorite areas of the home and the one spot the homeowners now say they always end up when sipping cocktails with friends or conversing after dinner.

In the living room, a Dessin Fournir chandelier and floor lamp are paired with a custom sofa and painted cushion by Marcus Mohon Interiors and gray antique oak hardwood floors. Among the streamlined, clean architectural lines, Mohon points out that the space exudes a modern attitude without being ultra-contemporary.

While the existing kitchen is undeniably contemporary, Mohon added balance in the space by creating a cozy breakfast nook and softening it with slip-covered chairs surrounding a custom bench and table he designed.

“Those chairs could be used in a modern or classic environment,” he says. “That is how you bridge it — you use pieces that could go either way.”

An additional favorite room is the wife’s office where chairs reupholstered in white leather create a stylish look against the boldly-painted built-ins coated in a color Mohon aptly describes as “the shade right before the sun disappears completely.”

“Another space that turned out magical is in the corner of the master bedroom,” says Mohon of the sprawling suite that looks out toward the Houston Medical Center. “The master bedroom is huge so we tamed it with a couple of smaller areas.”

In the master bathroom, Mohon installed a copper Ann Sacks tub and fixtures they had purchased for the estate. “They didn’t go well in the estate, but they work really well in this bathroom with the sinks,” he says.

In the luxurious foyer, internal velvet curtains conceal the service doors in the windowless space where a champagne-hued Murano chandelier hangs above shiny checkered marble floors, and Rehme steel and glass doors frame a corridor wrapped with paneled rosewood walls and inlaid brass.

Ultimately, a project’s success hinges on creating a space the homeowners want to live in — and this Houston high-rise is evidence of a job done well.

“The clients love the space,” Mohon says. “It’s a big space that takes up half of a floor. They say they had a hard time, at first, just figuring out where they want to sit. But it all flows together really well.” ♦

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