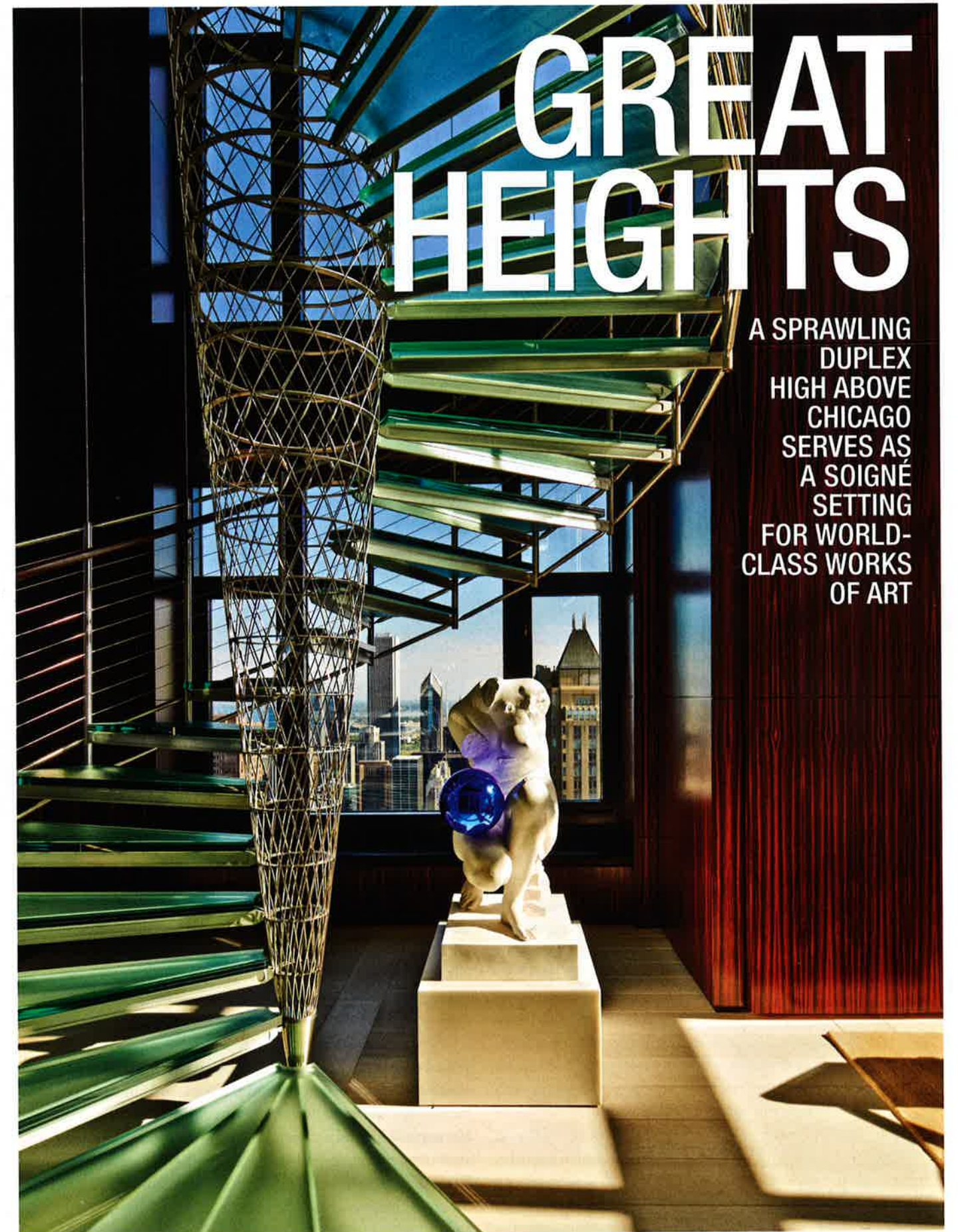


Macassar ebony panels the living room of a Chicago apartment renovated by the architecture firm Marvin Herman & Assoc. and interior design studio Atelier AM; various Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann club chairs stand at opposite ends of the bespoke Samuel Kasten Tisserand carpet, and the bronze armchairs at right are vintage Diego Giacometti. **Opposite:** A Jeff Koons sculpture is placed at the foot of a spiral staircase by James Carpenter Design Assoc. For details see Sources.

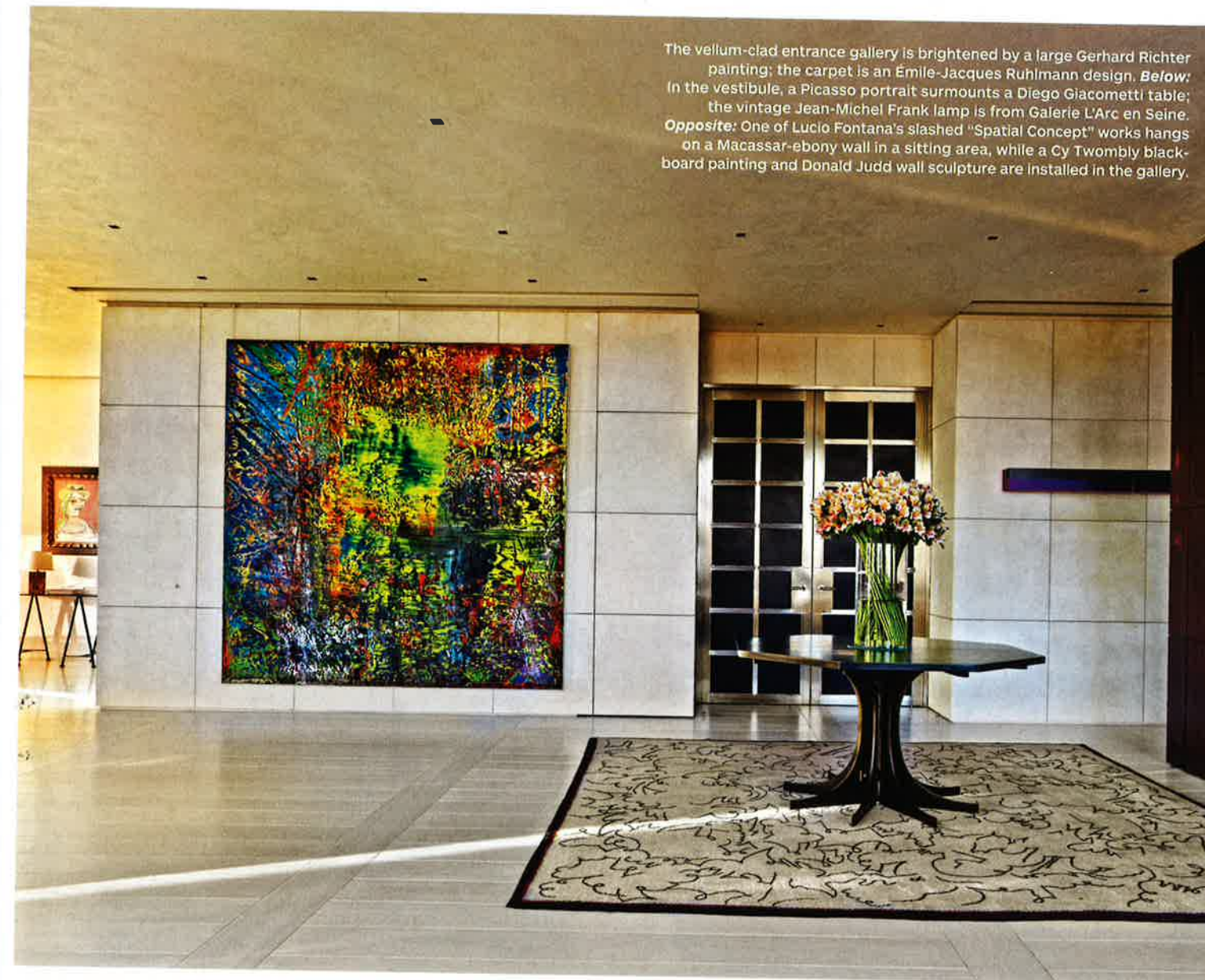


# GREAT HEIGHTS

A SPRAWLING  
DUPLEX  
HIGH ABOVE  
CHICAGO  
SERVES AS  
A SOIGNÉ  
SETTING  
FOR WORLD-  
CLASS WORKS  
OF ART

TEXT BY MAYER RUS PHOTOGRAPHY BY NIKOLAS KOENIG PRODUCED BY HOWARD CHRISTIAN





The vellum-clad entrance gallery is brightened by a large Gerhard Richter painting; the carpet is an Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann design. **Below:** In the vestibule, a Picasso portrait surmounts a Diego Giacometti table; the vintage Jean-Michel Frank lamp is from Galerie L'Arc en Seine. **Opposite:** One of Lucio Fontana's slashed "Spatial Concept" works hangs on a Macassar-ebony wall in a sitting area, while a Cy Twombly blackboard painting and Donald Judd wall sculpture are installed in the gallery.

**I**n their 1988 book *Living with Art*, legendary gallerist Holly Solomon and critic Alexandra Anderson-Spivy suggested that, in the matter of hanging pictures, "the best guideline is an understanding of the artist's or art work's [sic] aesthetic intention." Good advice, to be sure, but somewhat skimpy on practical details. If anything, the main lesson to be gleaned from the private collections highlighted in the duo's delightful tome is that there are no universal prescriptions for coexisting gracefully with art or displaying it to optimal effect. All anyone can do is create a sympathetic environment that allows the art to sing its own particular tune—whatever that might be.

Consider the voluminous Chicago apartment of a collector who has amassed an august trove of modern and contemporary art. It is a staggering assembly

ranging from a Picasso portrait of the artist's mistress and muse Marie-Thérèse Walter to one of Cy Twombly's signature blackboard paintings, from a mesmerizing Mark Rothko canvas with patches of glowing red atop deep brown to a rare Andy Warhol silkscreen of Elvis Presley, produced for the Pop Art master's 1963 solo show at Los Angeles's storied Ferus Gallery. While the works continue to thrill the man who acquired them, the high-rise home he commissioned in 1994 had begun to feel a bit stale. Although satisfied with the basic structure, layout, and circulation devised by leading Chicago architect Marvin Herman—who had centered the bi-level residence around an immense double-height living room with floor-to-ceiling views of the city and Lake Michigan—the owner believed that a change of materials, finishes, and furnishings would reenergize the atmosphere.

To update the premises, the collector enlisted a fresh set of eyes—two sets, to be exact, belonging to Alexandra and Michael Misczynski of Atelier AM, the L.A.-based design firm admired for its dexterity in grouping art and furniture in spare, elegant compositions. Collaborating with Herman, who was brought back for the project, the husband-and-wife team recast the home as a more glamorous, more contemporary version of its first incarnation. The overall feeling is also tauter, even as the annexation of a neighboring apartment for a new media room and guest quarters increased the total size of the residence to 8,600 square feet. "Our biggest change was paring down the palette, capitalizing on the best of what was already there and introducing a limited array of complementary materials," Michael explains. "Restraint was absolutely essential." →







At one end of the living room, chairs in the style of Paul Dupré-Lafon join a custom-made marble table and a Samuel Kasten Tisserand carpet. **Opposite, from top:** Paintings by Mark Rothko and Gerhard Richter overlook the dining room's bespoke palm-wood table and chairs, the latter upholstered in a Holland & Sherry fabric; the 1920s cabinet is by Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann, and the silk rug was custom made by Beauvais Carpets. On display in the kitchen are an Andy Warhol portrait of Elvis Presley and a work by Roy Lichtenstein; the hood, sink, and cabinetry are by Bulthaup, the counters are by Caesarstone, the sink fittings are by KWC, the microwave is by Miele, and the range is by Wolf.







The previous mélange of woods—among them anigre, bird's-eye maple, and lacewood—was replaced by a stronger scheme that relies almost exclusively on bleached rift-cut white oak for the floors and Macassar ebony for the paneling and other architectural details. Many paintings now hang on subtly mottled Venetian-plaster walls with a warm white glow that tempers the cool Chicago light. Figured surfaces provide striking backdrops for other works, such as Mark Tansey's *Study for Columbus Discovers Spain*, its vivid blue scene in rich contrast to the bar's striated honey-blond travertine. The Mischzynskis clad the entrance gallery in large squares of creamy vellum à la Jean-Michel Frank, on top of which they installed a knockout Gerhard Richter abstract painting and a lean Donald Judd "Progression" wall sculpture. And the media room is upholstered in dove-gray silk that hosts vibrant works by Joan Mitchell and Christopher Wool. New motorized shades, meanwhile, descend from ceiling slots to safeguard the precious artworks from sunlight.

While the apartment's changes appear to be largely cosmetic, the renovation was anything but a quick makeover. "We actually gutted the place and spent nearly two years reconstructing it," Herman says. Yet some of the architectural elements from the original setting were retained, among them the transparent spiral staircase that connects the living room to the upper level. It was created by James Carpenter, the light-and-glass wizard also responsible for the stainless-steel front doors and mezzanine railing. "The floating stair is a very graceful piece that looks as good today as it did in 1994," Herman says of the structure, which now swirls above a Jeff Koons "Gazing Ball" sculpture. "And it will look just as good 20 years from now."

Many of the home's vintage furnishings remain as well, though the Mischzynskis enhanced the stunning lineup of Diego Giacometti and Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann designs by introducing complementary pieces such as the sitting room's Paul Dupré-Lafon cocktail table. In the living room, prime examples of French Art Deco seating are organized into intimate groups on a 32-foot-long carpet of emerald mohair. Burgundy and claret fabrics balance that field of green, while ancient artifacts (a Bronze Age ritual ax, a Roman marble head) are sprinkled throughout the apartment as a foil to the 20th- and 21st-century treasures.

"We really had a head start on collecting great pieces for this project because the client has an incredible eye for furniture and objects," Michael says. "But in the end the artworks are the stars of the show—and that's exactly how it should be." □



**Clockwise from left:** The sitting room's sectional sofa is covered in a Samuel Kasten Tisserand fabric; in the niche is a pre-Angkorian sandstone lingam. A view of Chicago from the apartment. A Mark Tansey canvas presides over the travertine bar.







Onyx sheathes the master bath's tub and floor. **Opposite, from top:** A Roy Lichtenstein triptych faces an Alexander Calder sculpture in the master bedroom; the curtains are fashioned from a Jim Thompson silk, and the custom-made carpet is by Beauvais. The media room boasts abstract works by Joan Mitchell (left) and Christopher Wool; the carpet is by Beauvais.

