

# RUE DAILY

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**STUDIO SVEN CREATES AN “ARTFUL, YET A LITTLE WEIRD” HOME IN CHICAGO’S WEST LOOP**



Interior Design: **Studio  
Sven**

Photography: **Ryan  
McDonald**

Styling: **Kimberly  
Swedelius**

“Our client purchased a three-story building in Chicago’s lively West Loop neighborhood,” interior designer Lauren Svenstrup says. “In a past life, the building was a bit of a live/work situation, with an art gallery located on the first-floor commercial space and a private residence on the second and third floors.” The former tenant had been a gallery owner, and had designed the space for entertaining, filling it to the brim with works of art. “The neighborhood and location played a large role in the original design of the home, as spotlighted large-scale art installations drawing guests in as they traveled to and from local fine dining,” Lauren says.

Her firm—**Studio Sven**—was tapped to reimagine the space. The new homeowner was a bachelor seeking to embrace his next chapter of life while still reminiscing on past phases that left a great impression on him, including his time living in an artist enclave in West Oakland, CA. “His interest in art drew more on the experiential side than visual, and his design goal was to create space for moments of reflection and self-discovery—both for himself and his guests,” Lauren explains. “He dreamed of a home built for entertaining, but more importantly he wanted a space that was reflective of him, his hobbies, passions, successes... artful, yet a little weird.”

They removed the façade installations, allowing for more privacy, while bringing Studio Sven’s signature electric approach to the interiors. “The overall aesthetic was meant to be industrial, yet warm,” the designer shares. “We accomplished this with limewash walls, meant to evoke the feel of unfinished concrete. We incorporated blackened steel into our custom built-ins and there is a heavy use of black in contrast to the creamy walls. We also added wall-to-wall black, gauzy draperies to let in the light, but provide an extra layer of privacy.”

The original floor plan led into a large dining space when you reached the top of the stairs. “That didn’t feel like the right balance of space for our client’s daily use, so we flipped the floor plan,” Lauren recalls. “We transformed the dining room into a library-esque parlor that flows into the media-focused living room to allow conversation to progress naturally from room-to-room. As the least utilized space in the home, we moved the dining area to the back of the living room where the baby grand piano once lived.”

In the kitchen, they painted the existing perimeter cabinets black and left the black countertops, with the goal of having the perimeter of the kitchen fade away as a textural backdrop, ultimately allowing for a creamy marble center island to serve as the focal point. To add more storage to the space, they removed some of the kitchen cabinetry and covered a window—both seemingly controversial choices on the surface—but this allowed for a concealed built-in coat closet and a more functional dry bar.

One of the more unique areas of the home is the primary suite, which originally had a large seating area, ideal for a sofa and a TV. “But,” Lauren explains, “our client had his sights set on a space for meditation. After learning more about his personal meditation practices, we wanted the space to be more impactful than just an alter in the corner of the bedroom—something transcendent that brought you to another place.” She designed an architectural “Moon Gate,” which is a shape pulled from Buddhist culture featuring a rectangle within a circle and meant to balance yin and yang.

The design also called on many built-ins with plenty of niches to showcase the client’s collections. “We gave him the blueprint to grow into his style by filling his shelves with select placeholders, while leaving room for his collection to grow over time and empowering him to feel confident in purchasing works of art that held meaning,” Lauren says. “Every time I have visited since the project reveal, I’ve noticed a new treasure or piece of art nestled in the shelves.”

It took roughly a year—with the Studio Sven team stepping in whilst Lauren was on maternity leave—and the client was thrilled with the result. “He was fully appreciative of how the space came together and served as an extension of his passions, memories and hobbies,” she says.

***Take a tour in the slideshow.***

THUMBNAIL VIEW

