

CRAZY, SEXY, COOL

“It would have been easy to do this space in ivory and camel – the tone-on-tone you see in every magazine,” says Sandy LaMendola, ASID and principal of Twist Interior Design of Minneapolis, “but we needed to impart the owner’s love of color.” No small task given that the project, a Ralph Rapson contemporary in the Twin Cities, began with approximately 12,000 square feet of hard-edged white space.

“We had to soften, soften, soften,” LaMendola says of the living and dining room areas. “And we needed to achieve that with texture.” She chose Lucien Rollin sofas with channel detailing and button tufting to provide visual and actual textures. Delicate blue velvet upholstery added additional softness. “Using blue could be considered daring,” she says, “but it’s subdued so it’s soothing.” A custom-made Japanese rug was brought in to echo the subtle hue and define the seating area. >>

LaMendola used drapes to frame the dining area, temper the bold architecture and balance the acoustics of the grand space. "With all the hard surfaces, sound bounces around," she says. But one welcome sound is the gentle rush of the waterfall cascading down the wall that separates the dining room from the staircase, a feature that was already in place when the owner took possession of the home.

The furnishings in the space are simultaneously contemporary and timeless. "There are some classical elements to all of these pieces but they're pulled back to their essence," says LaMendola. "The arms and legs of the sofas and chairs are smooth and have a contemporary expression, but they also have a throwback to Deco. That's what's so great about them. This is a very livable room for the foreseeable future. It's not something you're going to change in five years."

The home's pulse quickens on the lower level, where two modern-day Mona Lisas peer provocatively from cushions lounging on the chairs at the base of the staircase. Red Venetian wax simmers on the walls and a one-word edict at eye level defies comers to *relax*. "It's an element of adult humor," says LaMendola. "Adult entertaining does go on down here." Indeed. The space is home to a disco decked out with lights, disco ball and sound system. A dance floor beckons from directly behind the barstools, and sudden urges for appletinis are not-so-subliminally triggered by the apple green Venetian wax framing the bar. And a blue acrylic bead wall serves as liaison between booze and boogie. "It seems like water when light goes across it," LaMendola says of the acrylic. "It has movement. It's a fantastic material to use where light is such an important element – like in a disco."

As for the bold palette, "The colors came together and they felt really strong," LaMendola says, adding that the less formal spaces of the lower level were intentionally playful. "It's still sophisticated, but it's executed with a verve that gives it a different level of intensity."

The same level of attention to lifestyle was paid to all the home's spaces. "Each piece makes a statement, but what they're really doing is supporting the activity that happens when people are in that space. And every space should feel effortless and appropriate."

Completed last summer, the project took about a year from design to installation. "He's decisive," LaMendola says of her client, adding her appreciation for his willingness to take risks. And the end result is a home that's comfortable and livable for the owner. And, according to LaMendola, that's the goal when designing any living space. "It's the backdrop on which you live your life." ■

