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Punk, Rocked!

Margaret Sutherlin | Photo: Anthony Tahlier | April 9, 2013

The interiors of a former auto repair warehouse are rock 'n' rolled out by a fresh design face.



Nicholas Moriarty of NM Interiors backs up to his wall graphic collaboration with artist Connie Noyes.

Punk music, flashy lighting and contemporary art make for quite the interiors mashup in Nicholas Moriarty's latest local project. "The client loves to DJ, and has a really big appreciation for British alternative rock and punk music," says the Chicago designer and founder of Nicholas Moriarty Interiors (nm-interiors.com (<http://nm-interiors.com>)), who was enlisted to repurpose his client's Wicker Park loft (a former auto warehouse) that was left with a mild identity crisis after a few false starts. Luckily, the two were on the same page out the gates. "We thought about the tailored sophistication and bespoke nature of Savile Row in London," explains Moriarty, "but with 'The Clash' splattered all over it—that's where a lot of the inspiration came from."

Figuring out how the colorful, rebellious British punk movement and the slick, cool lines of contemporary art could exist in the same space was no easy design feat, but the Chicago Merchandise Mart Design Center's "Ones to Watch" 2011 award nominee first took the plunge in the foyer. Featuring a custom bench—a collab between Moriarty and Bladon Conner Design Studio—upholstered in a Maharam fabric, the goal was to introduce a contemporary geometry throughout the space, along with cool gray and caramel neutrals in the rest of the house.

A frequent visitor of Asheville, N.C., Moriarty sourced many furnishings and accessories from the small town set in the mountains. "The food, art and culture are wonderful," he says. "There's just something in the air." His relationships with the local gallery owners there offered him access to pieces of art with a hip attitude that would add the "edge" needed for the sophisticated loft. Colorful photographs by Polish artist Krzysztof Wladyka from Castell Photography in Asheville balance the blue Le Soleil Suspension Lamp by Foscarini that the client had purchased prior to the project. "The photos have this wonderful way of taking up a lot of wall space and having a great impact without being so 'in your face,'" says Moriarty.

The standout piece in the entry area is the custom wall graphic by Chicago-based artist Connie Noyes. Picking up on the urban attitude of the exposed concrete ceilings, brick walls and rich earthy tones of the wood floors and dining table, the graphic dominates what was a lifeless and not particularly practical part of the foyer. "We used the vertical striation of the concrete within the Connie Noyes piece. We wanted to pick up on it and add another element of geometry so that it looked considered," says Moriarty. "We came up with the design and sold [the client] Dave on it—which was a bit of a challenge—but it turned out incredible."

Other conversation pieces include a custom lamp by Steven Haulenbeek with an orange cord and etchings by Mark Pease in the foyer; a nod to all things gritty and urban in the otherwise sleek and simple space for the dedicated entertainer.

Because being social was so high on the totem pole of priorities, Moriarty had to figure out a way to break up the open plan to give the kitchen, dining room and living room areas their own identity without the crowding. Calling on Bladon Conner once again, Moriarty collaborated on a custom dining table made of bleached walnut, complete with a knife edge and solid black steel base. "We wanted it to look like this beautiful piece of wood, just floating there," says Moriarty. The weightless wood ceiling, caramel colors from the exposed brick

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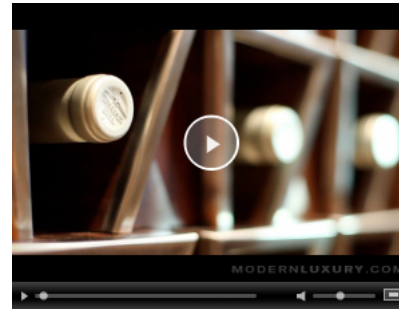
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and grays from the painted drywall were pulled into the loungelike living area, where Moriarty headed to Room & Board for the chairs and Asheville again for the sofa. Moriarty also kept a custom orange striped ottoman by Michael Richman and added a bench for seating.

With a refocused vision on the colors and pieces already in the space, Moriarty said the loft was one of the more unique challenges he has faced as a designer. "Something I really have disdain for in the industry is the idea that you have to get rid of everything that is already there," says Moriarty. "The existing elements—the chandelier over the dining table and the console table—informed a lot of the design decisions we made and served as the starting point from which I found inspiration."

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