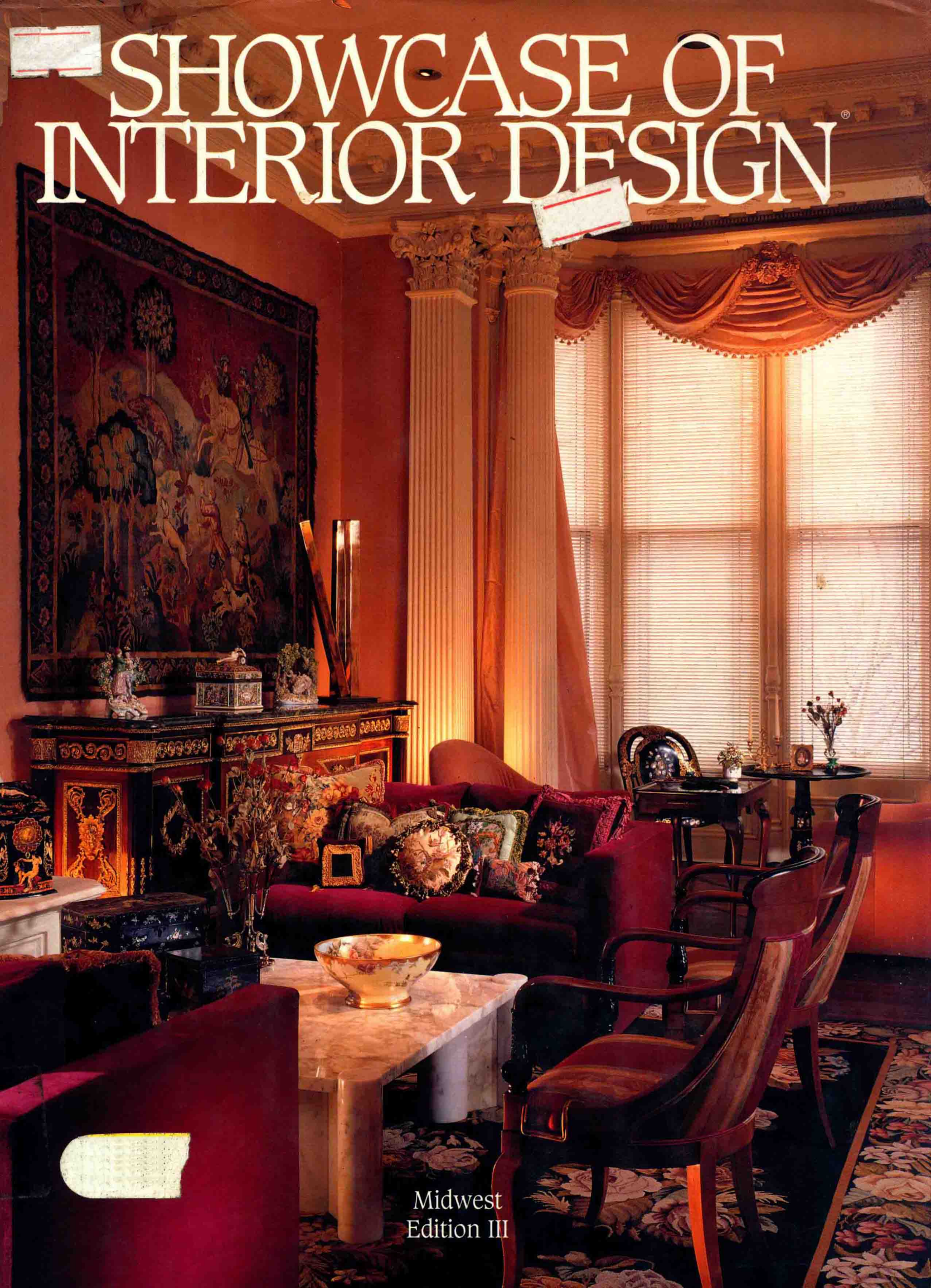


# SHOWCASE OF INTERIOR DESIGN<sup>®</sup>



Midwest  
Edition III



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Midwest Edition III



Rockport/Vitae Publishing, Inc.

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Photo: James Yochum



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# FRESH VISIONS, LASTING VALUES: ENVIRONMENTS FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

*A Conversation with Eleven Showcase Designers*  
By Elizabeth Crouch

**A** single block in an older neighborhood of Indianapolis, Des Moines or Grand Rapids presents an anthology of architectural styles – English Tudor shares a shade tree with Greek Revival; Dutch Colonial hugs hedges with Art Deco. Interiors speak with great diversity as well: individual visions are as varied as names on the mailbox or cars in the drive. Yet amidst these differences, we find agreement where it counts the most. Whether you were born to the private estates of Bloomfield Hills or to the family compound of an Indiana farm, Midwesterners insist on value.

Our *Showcase* designers tell us that whatever the city – Chicago, Cleveland or Detroit – today's interiors are fresher, freer, more personal than ever before. They are also more permanent. The throw-away era of the '80s is over. People in the '90s want to build lasting value into their homes and furnishings. Value that will carry them into the new millennium.

OPPOSITE: Cynthia S. Ohanian Interiors, Inc.: Not a detail is overlooked in a room that combines sumptuous architectural elements with breathtaking interior design.







*Enduring is in, disposable is out*

Larry Deutsch has surveyed the interior design scene in Chicago and beyond for over thirty years. He sees a shift, not so much in design trends, but in how people are approaching design. "People are smarter about it now, especially the younger set. Twenty years ago their parents would have hired somebody and said, 'Here's the money, go do it!' Today, a client says, 'We can only do this much, and we want to give you lots of input.'"

From her studio on Main Street in Ames, Iowa, Linda Glantz would seem to have her finger on the pulse of interior design in the Heartland. "Generally, people are willing to invest in better furnishings, but they are extremely concerned with budget. They recognize that doing their interiors involves a substantial outlay, but they also know that there will be a long-term return on their investment."

Like many established designers, John Wiltgen attracts an affluent clientele, but finds that no matter how much money people have, they are careful about investments. "I have a client who just bought a two-million-dollar Picasso only to discover bugs in the picture frame! Naturally, he's upset. Today everyone's concerned with value. In the '80s, people thought there would be no end to prosperity and if you got tired of something or it didn't hold up, you could just toss it out. Now people want things that will be enduring."

People also want to avoid costly mistakes. Laura Barnett tells of a client who led her upstairs to the attic where she stashed her false-starts. "She had tried to do it on her own, and had so many pieces that didn't work, she began passing them off to her relatives. [Evidently not to her friends!] You explain to clients what is trendy about something, or what is classic. If it's a good piece, they can change the fabric ten times, and pass it on to their children."

Cynthia Ohanian tells her clients: "You dress yourself all your life, so you learn from your mistakes. After a while you begin to find your own style. But you do your home maybe three times in your life. Statistically



this is true, even if you could afford to redo it more often. You don't want to live with your mistakes for fifteen years between projects. This is why you need the experience and education of a professional." Linda Glantz agrees: "When you buy a pair of shoes that don't fit, you can put them away in the top of your closet and pretend they aren't there. But a seven-foot sofa that doesn't work is impossible to ignore." She tells about a client who wanted to change her living room drapes. "She told me she had put them up 'temporarily' for her son's graduation. I asked how long ago that had been. 'Twenty-three years,' she replied, admitting that she had never liked them."

### *Cranking up the quality*

The trend toward value is also reflected in greater attention to the architectural quality of our houses. Nancy Guerrant, who works primarily with older homes, lives with her architect husband in an 1898 Chicago Victorian. "In the '50s and '60s, people did horrible things to their houses. In our case, someone had ripped off all the crown moldings and picture moldings. The hardwood floors in the entry hall were covered with black and white linoleum squares, and contact paper had been stuck over the handsome Victorian tile of the fireplace. Today, people have much more respect for the original features and embellishments."

Barnett also sees people restoring architectural integrity to their homes. "We're stripping wood of paint, refinishing stairs and using runners rather than wall-to-wall." Recently, behind a blaze of beveled mirror strips, she discovered a wonderful classic fireplace. "We're putting the elegance back. It doesn't have to be a strict restoration – it has to work for a family in the '90s. What we try to achieve is a wonderful combination of classicism with contemporary style."

In some cases, cranking up the quality means adding architectural features which never existed before. Deutsch describes a traditional colonial house with shutters and nice exterior detail, but typical of many

homes built in the 40s, the inside was plain. “The rooms looked like boxes until we added moldings, chair rails and baseboards.” This kind of investment in the house itself not only adds charm, it adds value – especially at resale. Deutsch also enjoys opening up more recent, split-level homes, building contemporary additions with sky lights, and turning one-story rooms into two-story spaces. “We redesign these houses to make them into something better than what they were originally.”

To enhance resale value, Ohanian encourages clients to hold the dining room to a reasonable size, even if they rarely entertain, and to plan for ample storage spaces throughout. “Neutral architectural backgrounds in bathrooms and kitchens are also advisable, since a person considering the home for purchase in the future will not want to rip out ceramic tile and more permanent features if the color isn’t right. It’s better to put interest and personal expression into wall coverings and accessories,” she explains, “–things that can be easily changed.”

Barnett passes on these tips: “Going with hardwood floors and area rugs is a wonderful way to crank up the elegance. And today, even in the smallest job we’ll use marble counter tops. With the wonderful sealers currently available, people are no longer afraid of these materials.” She believes that because of their experience, designers know best where quality counts the most – where your investment will have the greatest impact. “If you’re putting in an oriental rug, for example, put down a good one. If you can’t afford that, don’t use an inexpensive knock-off. It’s better to use a plain area rug with a great looking cocktail table.”

Wiltgen believes that people shouldn’t settle for something merely “so-so,” when often it doesn’t cost any more to achieve something outstanding. “Designers know how to coordinate all the details at the beginning of a project in order to achieve something truly amazing. My clients have wonderful taste, and many have fine collections of art and antiques, but that doesn’t qualify them to create or design a home the way we can do it. Could many of them furnish a home?

OPPOSITE: Lawrence Boeder  
Interior Design: Sumptuous furnishings  
add a sense of grandeur to this master  
bedroom in one of Chicago’s finest  
homes.



