

JUNE 2017 // Home Profile: Glamour and Style Beat Size

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GLAM WITH A PLAN

Designer uses a cohesive vision to create a space that's calm yet colorful.

STORY BY STACEY FREED | PHOTOS BY SANDRA KICMAN

Details, details: The attention to sight lines and elements extends to geometric angles in the tray ceiling and fireplace, all balanced by round lamp bases and glass vases, a round end table and circular chandelier and rounded sofa arms.



Some spaces just feel comfortable, but we can't put a finger on why.

Personal taste is involved, but much of the feeling has to do with the subtle cues that tie a room together. It can be a difficult feat for most of us to pull off, but it's the bread and butter of a good designer. Take the home of Raphael and Sherry Tshibangu.

In 2015, the couple decided to downsize from their 6,000-square-foot Pittsford home. They worked with Pride Mark Homes to build a townhome nearby, but half that size. Throughout their new home, repetition in shapes, colors and textures, along with attention to sight lines, make rooms feel distinctive yet connected.

To achieve the look and feel they wanted—something with an elegant yet comfortable and inviting aesthetic—Sherry and Raphael knew they'd need the help of a good designer.

In their previous home, they had worked with Sonya Allen, owner of Sonya Allen Interiors in Rochester, and they had become close friends. So they turned to her again, bringing her in during the pre-construction planning stages so she could work closely with Pride Mark and local architect Jim Fahey.

Allen says she's all about "deep listening," paying close attention not only to what her clients tell her but also what they like to do, how they dress, how they entertain, what type of art they collect. She says she understands that what she does "affects the way people live, work and play in their space."

Because she was involved from the beginning and knew that the Tshibangus wanted "a large-house feel in a scaled-down concept," Allen was able to offer customization ideas to the builders.

For example, she had them extend the great room





Homeowner Raphael Tshibangu was a bit nervous about the great room's blue accent wall, but he loves the way it turned out. Designer Sonya Allen covered the wall in a commercial-grade wall covering (designed by Jim Thompson Fabrics) with a moiré effect, adding texture, dimension and a bit of shine.



and change the shape of the ceiling to a rectangular one. That added height and hints at a defined border between the kitchen and great room.

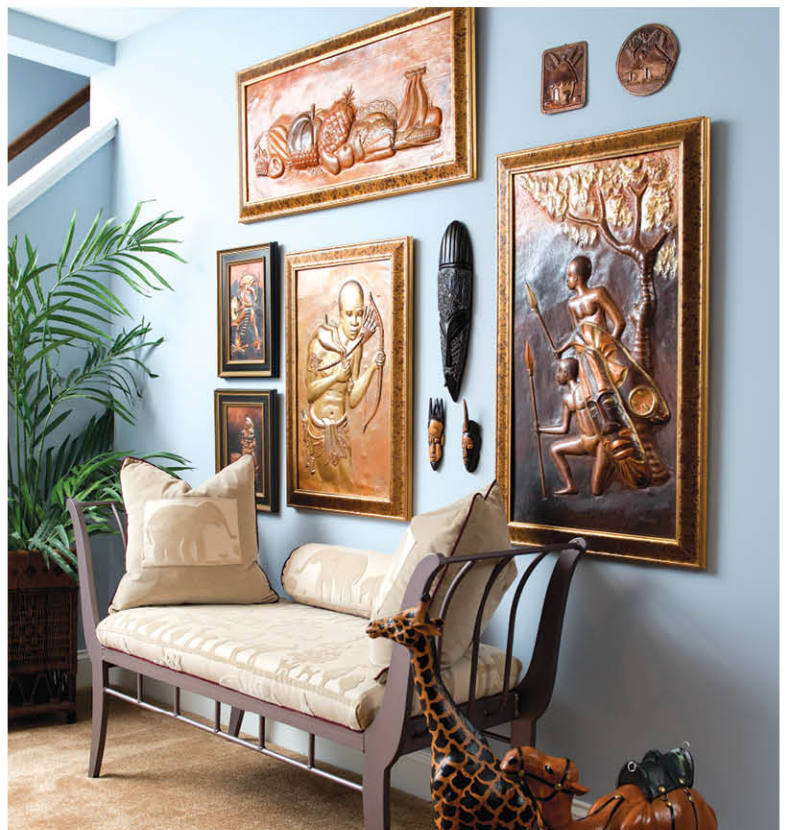
For a deeper and longer bathroom soaking tub, Allen suggested pulling space from a closet. She customized the shape of the kitchen island to make it larger for more seating and to better fit the flow of traffic. In the dining room, a cold-air return vent was originally designed to be front and center on the main wall, so Allen asked that it be moved to a side wall. Now, a large mirror hangs on the main dining room wall, giving the appearance of a much bigger room.

"No matter where you look, I considered everything you might see," Allen says.

That sensibility creates order and calmness—welcome feelings after some turmoil from the move.

"When we announced that we were going to [move], the family yelled, 'You can't sell the family home!' They were very emotional about it," says Sherry, a professor of business at Monroe Community College who grew up in the city and attended the University of Rochester.

She and Raphael, an OB-GYN originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo who went to medical school at the University of Rochester, are



The Tshibangus' collection of African art, scattered in their former home, was grouped in several places for greater effect.



Glass vessels add a touch of color in the master bath, complementing the owners' original African art pieces.

the hub of their extended family.

"We used to host 50 people, no problem," Raphael says. Although they have given up some of the holiday hosting, they still entertain often, and they made it a priority to finish the lower level of the townhouse for out-of-town visitors such as their daughter, her husband and their two children who live in Austria.

Downsizing wasn't as easy as they had hoped it would be.

"There were a lot of things I would have loved to keep, like my pool table and a full gym," Raphael says. "It was overwhelming," Sherry adds. "I have a problem letting go. That's when we called Sonya. She helped us decide what to keep and what to give up."

Because Allen knew the number of bedrooms and the size of all the rooms in the new townhome and had a complete vision for the overall design—"glam meets mid-century modern"—she was able to say what furniture would fit, both physically and aesthetically.

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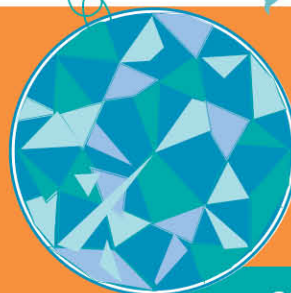
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So the “beautiful sleigh bed and matching end tables” had to go, says Sherry. But she had to keep the purple couches, which are now settled in the great room.

“They’re not afraid of color,” Allen says of the Tshibangus, and she played off the couch colors in the wall coverings, paint colors, art work and pillows—again, repetition that helped keep things connected.

Allen worked on a lighting plan that includes LED, halogens and some incandescents for impact and ambience. For the “glam,” she mixed metals—shiny and matte, silver and antiqued bronze—in light fixtures and furniture. There are shiny surfaces and smooth ones. And all of it works together.

“I love that it’s functional,” Sherry says. “I love the stimulation of the colors. I love coming home to my home.” **R**

Stacey Freed is a writer living in Pittsford.



A geometric, Art Deco-inspired wallcovering by Seabrook in the guest bath and powder room brings a feel of Old Hollywood glamour.



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