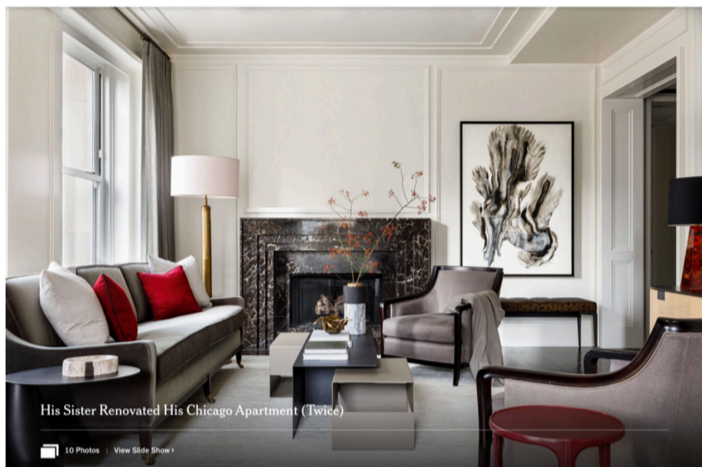


The New York Times

ON LOCATION

How Many Renovations Does It Take to Get Things Just Right?

More than one, as a Chicago designer and her client — who also happens to be her brother — discovered.



His Sister Renovated His Chicago Apartment (Twice)

10 Photos View Slide Show



By Tim McKeough

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Creating a home that suits you isn't easy. It takes time, trial and error — and sometimes more than one renovation.

Chris Taylor, 41, discovered this firsthand after buying a 2,500-square-foot apartment in the Palmolive Building, an Art Deco tower in Chicago, in 2013. The unit, which cost about \$1.35 million, had been converted from office space to a condominium nearly a decade earlier, and he did a small renovation to add his sense of style.

"I wanted to give nods to the Art Deco features, while making it my own," said Mr. Taylor, who works in finance. "But it was also at a time when I was still evolving in my career and aspirations. And it was a big investment, so I could only do so much with the unit at that point."

By the fall of 2019, he was established in his career and ready to try something more ambitious. "I really wanted to take the apartment to the next level," he said. "I wanted it to be comfortable and timeless, and to make it a warm, luxurious place to live. I wanted to enhance certain details and finishes, to kind of reinvest in the apartment."



Kate Taylor, an interior designer, recently renovated an apartment in the Palmolive Building in Chicago for her brother, Chris Taylor — for the second time. *Almide Mazzenga*

Fortunately, he had a skilled operative ready to help: his sister, Kate, who owns [Kate Taylor Interiors](#), a Chicago-based design firm. Ms. Taylor had designed the 2013 iteration of the apartment and, after designing a second home for Mr. Taylor in Laguna Beach, Calif., was ready to take another run at his Chicago apartment.

"He is someone who always likes to have a project," said Ms. Taylor, 38.

Indeed, Mr. Taylor said he finds interior design almost therapeutic. "I work in finance, so partnering with Kate on different projects provides me with a creative outlet that I really like, outside of my day job," he said. "It's just a great, collaborative family effort."

"We do get along very well," Ms. Taylor said. "There are always bumps in the road, but we make it through."

This time, the unforeseen bump was the pandemic. In November 2019, Ms. Taylor began developing plans for a renovation with a palette of warm colors and menswear-inspired fabrics. The goal, she said, "was to have it feel kind of bachelor pad, but not too bachelor pad."

She redesigned the kitchen in green lacquer and added a walnut desk nook with a reeded drawer and Calacatta Turquoise marble. She added moldings, charcoal cashmere drapery and a mobile-like chandelier of glass orbs in the living-and-dining room. She lined the den walls in a wool-and-cashmere fabric and added a custom sectional sofa large enough to accommodate Mr. Taylor's 6-foot-5 frame in front of the TV. She overhauled his primary walk-in closet with floor-to-ceiling walnut built-ins.



When the pandemic struck and the building halted his renovation, Mr. Taylor lived without a functional kitchen for months. Now he has a new kitchen with Calacatta Turquoise marble counters. *Almide Mazzenga*

Selective demolition, including removal of the old kitchen, began in early March of last year — just in time for the project to get shut down when the building halted all renovations as Covid-19 spread across the country.

"The apartment was just in shambles," Ms. Taylor said, and barely habitable.

"I had no kitchen counters, no kitchen sink and really no furniture," said Mr. Taylor, who took to washing dishes in his laundry-room sink. "I was running my business from the equivalent of a card table in an empty dining room with cardboard on the floors."

But he was more amused than upset about his predicament. "Relatively speaking, compared to what other challenges were being faced, it paled in comparison," he said. "It just made the renovation a little bit more memorable."

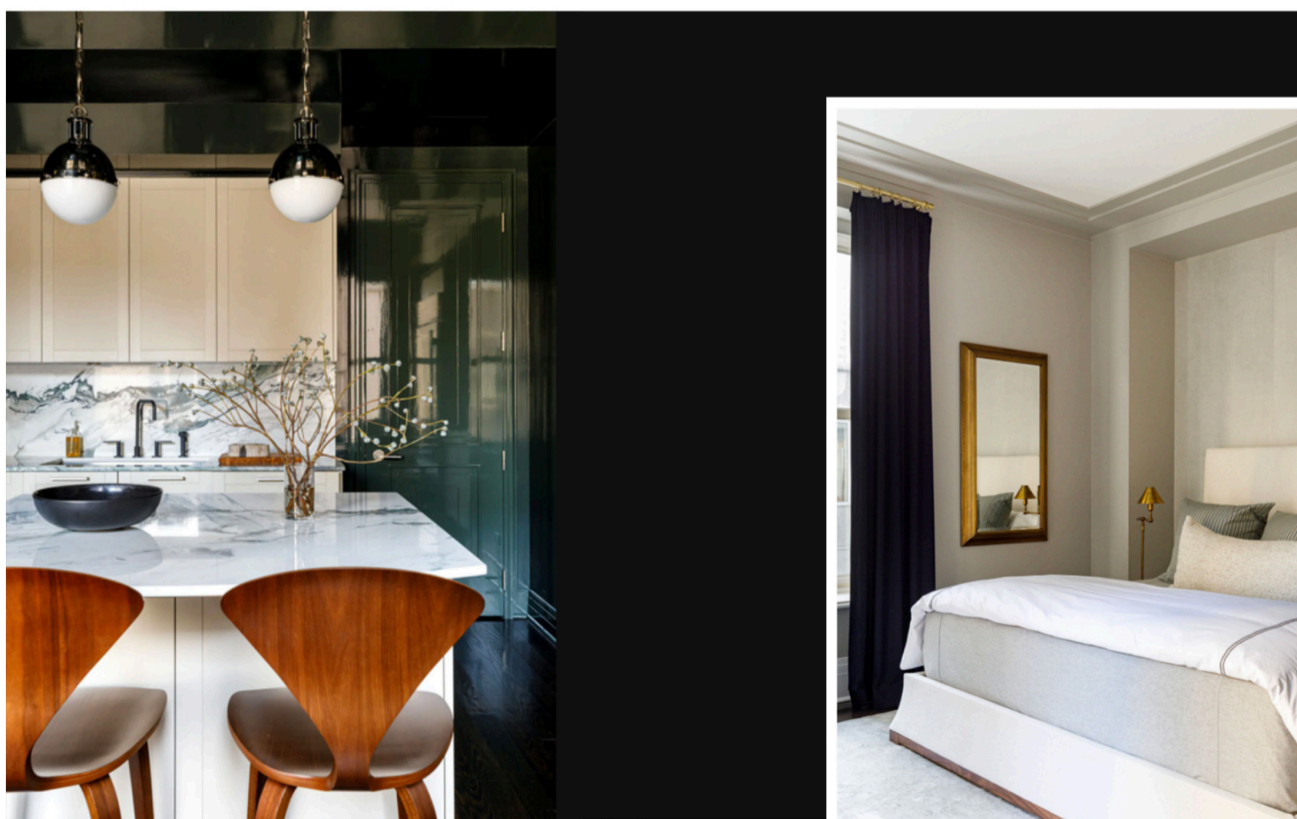
After Memorial Day, contractors were allowed back into the building to continue work. In the weeks that followed, Mr. Taylor got his new counters, sink and furniture, and watched as his sister's vision for a polished, upscale bachelor pad came to life. The project was completed in September, at a total cost of about \$450,000.

One of the few points of contention was a James Bond-themed work by the artist Robert Mars, which Mr. Taylor, a fan of the movie franchise, picked up in Laguna Beach. As a piece of art, "it's maybe not my first choice," Ms. Taylor said diplomatically. But she found space for it above a console in the living room.

Such concessions are a natural part of any designer-client relationship, even (or especially) when the people involved are siblings. And in this case, her client is very happy.

"The best compliment I can give Kate is that not only did she execute flawlessly, but she created an environment where I want to come home," Mr. Taylor said.

He said he envisions keeping the refreshed apartment for many years. But his sister suspects it won't be long before he finds another renovation project somewhere else. "I'm sure we'll do this again in the near future," she said. "And I'm happy to have him as a client."



The walls of the bedroom are finished in faux suede wallcovering from Phillip Jeffries. The Como Bed is from Dmitriy & Co. *Almide Mazzenga*