



From left: Architect Fred Wilson updated the original Spanish colonial style with a new roof, stucco, windows and window openings, completely concealing the additions to the home. The backyard's lush plantings are by Mariani Landscape; materials were chosen to look like they could have been there for many years, such as the chiseled black granite in the mudroom.

# grand COMEBACK

This Winnetka manse was left for dead when Morgante Wilson first saw it. But the grandeur was always there; it just needed the right team to bring it back to life.

By Andrea Mills // Photography by Michael Robinson



“We really admire the history of the North Shore,” says architect Elissa Morgante. “It gives a lot of character when you breathe new life into old homes that were once worthy and beautiful.” Morgante and her husband, Fred Wilson, founded their architecture and design firm, Morgante Wilson ([morgantewilson.com](http://morgantewilson.com)), more than 30 years ago, and they have become known for masterfully transforming historic but decrepit structures into visionary, majestic spaces. So it was a perfect match when they got a call from potential clients who were looking at a Mediterranean-style home in Winnetka that was billed as a teardown.

“The owners had lived in the house a long time, and it was in a state of really bad disrepair,” says Morgante of the Spanish colonial revival home originally designed by architect Edwin Hill Clark. But the home sits on a stunning lot and had the bones to become spectacular. The project started from the outside in with Wilson, who oversees the exterior architecture on the firm’s projects. Almost everything was reworked: New sections of the roof and stucco were selected to match the original; old windows were replaced while new ones were added. Mariani Landscape reimagined the lush gardens and backyard. And most notably, sizable additions were integrated into Clark’s design so elegantly that you can’t tell what is original and what is new.

When it comes to the interior—Morgante’s domain (the couple’s



From top: The homeowner's Queen Anne chairs were given a top-to-bottom reupholstery treatment with Holly Hunt fabric. The airy pendant by Zaneen adds a modern touch to the traditional Baker dining table and symmetry of the built-in wine cabinets; extensive paneling and built-ins in the library were painted in Benjamin Moore Westcott Navy, paired with a vintage Julian Chichester desk. Opposite page: A custom window banquette in Romo fabric and a custom metal table provide a spot for conversation in the billiards room.

priorities overlap when it comes to interior architecture)—everything was manipulated in some way. A much larger custom kitchen, a billiards room, a mudroom, an entry and a family room were made possible because of the extended footprint. They kept a formal dining room, but it is now much bigger and connected to the kitchen by way of a butler's pantry. Archways, both new and original, are employed throughout the interior architecture as an homage to the home's history. The foyer still has the original terrazzo floor, and the stairway was updated with new treads and a coat of paint. The kitchen and bathrooms were designed to look like they had always been there, with vintage hardware and custom colored tiles, while the mudroom features black granite with chiseled edges.

As much as the duo honored the home's pedigree, "it is essentially all new," says Morgante, referring to the plumbing, electrical and technology that make it a modern home. In terms of furnishings, the dining room table was the homeowner's grandmother's and the dining chairs were reupholstered, but everything else is new. Morgante admits it was a seamless process because the homeowner was decisive with a streamlined, contemporary aesthetic.

Lighting in particular makes a dramatic





statement, starting with a Lindsey Adelman fixture in the foyer. The living room features a series of Barovier & Toso Samurai suspension lights, themselves a mix of old and new, that play off the extensive, original oak paneling that was painted white. The fireplace is also original, with a new limestone surround. The kitchen pendants with a silver-leaf interior are by Catellani & Smith, while a sculptural light by Arturo Alvarez hangs over an Oly Studio table in the breakfast room. There is ample closed storage space throughout to satisfy the homeowner's need for cleanliness and organization. All of the art is from the homeowner's collection.

The main floor has a sunlit, airy feel until you reach the spacious billiards room with a custom table by Vas Design Inc. "There is a really good synergy coming off the living room into the billiards room where all the trim changes to dark," says Morgante. "It has a swarthy, more industrial feel, and it takes down the formality of the living room," she adds. French doors lead to the backyard in an inspired transition from indoors out that creates a great flow for entertaining alfresco.

The architecture of the period has been embraced and paired with modern updates and furnishings to suit the young family. "I love it when you get an old house with clients who have the energy to revive it," says Morgante. "It looks like it was always this beautiful and perfect." ■

From left: The cozy family room highlights art from the homeowner's collection and modern furniture pieces by Kara Mann, like the coffee table and lounge chair, creating a comfy space for family TV-watching; the breakfast room features a round table by Oly Studio with a sculptural light fixture by Arturo Alvarez. The outdoor Janus et Cie dining chairs withstand everyday family living.