



# Views from the Top

Sleek and sensual baths celebrate modernism and a great city

By Lee Ann Murphy



Picture it: Chicago, 1929. Construction has been completed on the Palmolive Building, a monument to 20th-century architecture. From this point on, Michigan Avenue will be the center of upscale commercial enterprise in the nation's second largest city. In 1930, the famous Palmolive Beacon was erected atop an aluminum and steel tower, rising 75 ft. from the roof of this architectural masterpiece. For more than 50 years, the Beacon swept across the night sky in the Windy City in 30-second rotations. And when the Beacon glows again this year, after a multimillion dollar building-wide restoration project is complete, its light will shine directly into the stunning new bathroom designed by Michael Richman, of Michael Richman Interiors, for a young entrepreneur.

This 5,500-sq.-ft. bachelor pad is just across the street from the Palmolive building. The building, along with the rest of the skyline, is an integral player in the apartment's style and feel, said Richman, who designed the magnificent "his" and "her" bathrooms along with the rest of the space. The panoramic cityscapes define these two separate but related bathrooms, which share perpendicular walls with the master bedroom.

"His" space is most often used by the bachelor owner. Its layout and design are meant to incorporate utilitarian needs into a modern aesthetic that blends well with the architectural spirit of the city. Large picture windows allow the surrounding buildings to become a part of the design.

"In the original layout, the sink and vanity were on an interior wall," said Richman. "We reconfigured it so that they would be on the exterior wall, which lets the client look out on the city while he shaves and gets ready." Richman designed a tall, slender sliver of a mirror to be mounted between the windows, making it possible to maintain the views and offer grooming space on the same wall. Starting below the window is a zebra wood vanity cabinet inspired by the modernist sensibility of furniture designer Florence Knoll.

"We built a much larger shower by eating into a walk-in closet area," said Richman. A linen closet and additional storage in the master bedroom were adequate and allowed the closet to be sacrificed.

Back-painted glass was used in the shower's interior, offering a sleek modern look and evoking the serenity of still water. The aquatic feel of

the shower is a perfect complement to the spectacular views of Lake Michigan the apartment enjoys. A rain shower, custom sprays and music were all incorporated into the space.

"Her" space is used more for entertainment than everyday grooming. "It's the showstopper at parties," said Richman, who added that the client has regular gatherings of 100 or more people. Guests gravitate toward the luxurious space, with its circular whirlpool tub, Venetian plaster walls and elegant mosaic tile. The real star of the show, however, is the ceiling-mounted tub filler, which allowed Richman to avoid a cluttered look on the tub deck and creates a spectacular display as water falls from the ceiling into the tub.

As in "his" bath, Richman accentuated the views by freeing up the window wall. "There was an enormous 8-ft. tub in front of the window," said Richman. "Replacing it with the circular tub freed the wall from that heaviness and gave the space a bigger, more open feel." The tub's contoured interior allows bathers to sit in the perfect position to take advantage of the views.

The previous owner, also a bachelor, used "her" space as a spa. Richman turned it into a functioning bathroom again by finding the original spot where the toilet was plumbed and reinstalling one. By using similar design elements like the zebra wood vanities and floating, backlit mirrors, "her" bathroom is aesthetically married to "his."

The soothing blue of the back-painted glass brings a serenity to both bathrooms without compromising the modern, urban aesthetic that is created through the vanities, the large square porcelain sinks and the minimalist hardware and furniture.

All of these elements turn what was once a gaudy, 1980s bachelor pad into a classic, modern masterpiece that doesn't lose its bachelor appeal. "I think it's fitting that the Palmolive Building, which was the headquarters for *Playboy* magazine in the '60s and '70s, is such a big part of the view, and that the building's modern elements are reflected in the design of the bathrooms," said Richman. The new spaces blend the suave, classic modernism of the past with the serene and peaceful elements the contemporary homeowner craves. ■

*(Opposite) The bathrooms in this Chicago bachelor pad are as much about function as they are the views they take in. Every aspect of the "his" and "her" spaces was designed to maximize the breathtaking vistas. For instance, mirrors were placed on side walls in his bath instead of straight on. "Her" large, round tub was placed directly in front of the window, thoroughly enhancing the aquatic mood that begins with Lake Michigan just outside.*



#### WALLS

- Venetian plaster makes for smooth, clean walls that don't compete with views
- Mirror floats away from wall and is backlit, giving space an airy feeling
- Neutral color provides backdrop for bath's stronger elements

#### VANITY

- Exotic zebra wood adds truly modern touch
- Deep color offsets the bath's mostly white color palette, lending richness and warmth
- Wood's vertical grain contrasts with and complements the room's many horizontal lines
- Cabinets and drawers are sans hardware so as not to disrupt the vanity's clean lines

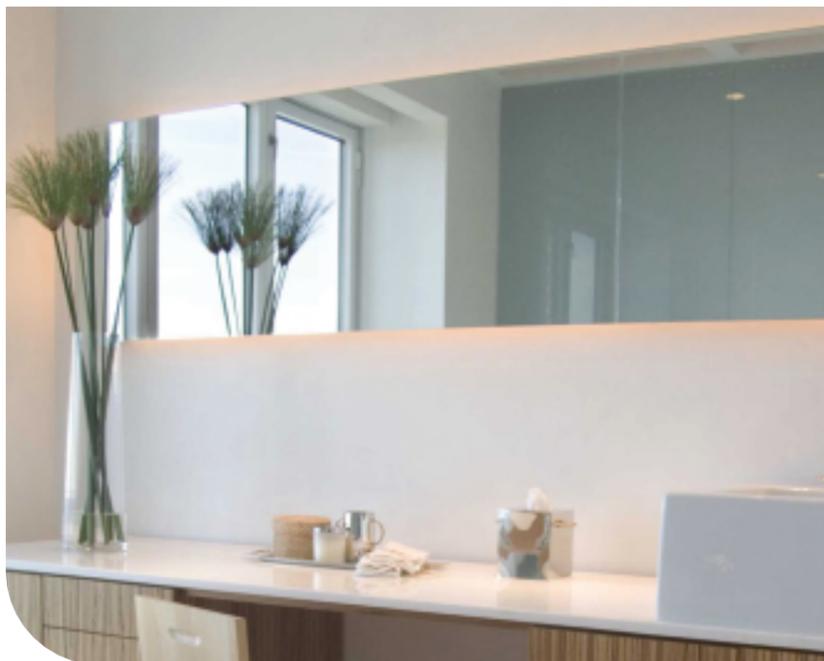
#### TUB

- Round tub replaces 8-ft.-long one, giving the space more of an open feel
- Shape adds visual interest and allows bathers perfect vantage point to take in views
- Tub filler is ceiling-mounted so as not to clutter tub deck
- Mosaic tiles add elegant, shimmery effect





*A wall is not all that these "his" and "her" baths share. Both feature back-painted glass in the shower and spectacular views of Chicago and Lake Michigan. "His" shower, left, also comes complete with a rain shower, custom sprays and built-in speakers. "Hers" is defined by a round tub and square sinks.*



### sources

Designer: Michael Richman—Michael Richman Interiors, Chicago; [www.richmaninteriors.com](http://www.richmaninteriors.com)

#### Manufacturers

Sinks: Lacava

Faucets: Dornbracht

Steam Shower: Mr. Steam

Showerhead (his): Hansgrohe

Toilets: Kohler

Tub (hers): Americh

Tub filler (hers): Kohler

Photography: © Agnes Donnadieu Studio

## products



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1 The back-painted glass in the shower enclosure was custom made by Chicago's **Glassworks**. According to designer Michael Richman, the process requires time and care. "They bring the glass in to measure exactly where the holes need to go for the shower equipment," he said. "Then they take it back out, cut it and temper it." **Circle No. 110**

2 This Laminar wall- or ceiling-mount bath filler from **Kohler** features an opening 2 cm. in diameter and is constructed of solid brass for durability and reliability. A variety of finishes is available for the visible panel, including polished chrome, brushed chrome, polished nickel, brushed nickel, brushed bronze, polished brass and French gold. **Circle No. 111**

3 The Aquagrande porcelain sink from **Lacava** can be installed freestanding or wall-mounted. Dimensions are 39<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. wide x 22 in. deep. Available colors are white, biscuit and satin black. The sink comes with a choice of no faucet holes, one hole or three holes in an 8-in. spread. Furniture and other accessories are also available. **Circle No. 112**

4 The San Raphael Comfort Height toilet from **Kohler** has the company's lowest-profile tank, making it a perfect fit for the modern look of these his and her baths. The one-piece model features a Twin Touch flush actuator that allows the user to choose a lower-volume flush for liquid waste or a high-volume flush. Dimensions are 30 in. x 19<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. x 21<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. **Circle No. 113**

5 In keeping with the clean lines of the bath, **Dornbracht's** Tara Classic faucet was used in the spaces. The three-hole basin mixer comes in four finishes, including polished chrome and platinum. The collection comprises everything from showerheads and bodysprays to tissue holders and glass shelves. **Circle No. 114**