

RETRO ACTIVE

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THIS IS NOT YOUR FATHER'S MONTGOMERY WARD BUILDING, THOUGH HE MIGHT RECOGNIZE SOME OF THE FURNITURE. Handed the opportunity to plan and furnish one of the first residential conversions going into the 1970s-era Ward headquarters tower (now called The Montgomery) Chicago über-designer Michael Richman decided he'd take a cue from the building's architectural heritage and "reference the grooviness."

To be clear, nothing about this place is going to make you think of macramé plant holders and Hendrix posters. If Richman poked through the Love Generation catalog, it was for inspiration rather than some cool Naugahyde lounge. One thing the designer does very well, and one of the reasons these clients love working with him, is that he custom-fits his own pieces to his projects—like the foyer's startling glass Ribbon Table, the master bedroom's raffia-and-Lucite Macau cabinet or the astonishing Z-Stripe dining table and buffet. "That dining table is one of the first things we figured out," says Richman. "It's just a little bit '70s, and somewhat inspired by Paul Evans pieces."

INTERIOR DESIGN: Michael Richman, Michael Richman Interiors
HOME BUILDER: Jake Goldberg, Goldberg General Contracting, Inc.
BEDROOMS 3 | BATHROOMS 4 | SQUARE FEET 2,500





GALLERY WALK

In the foyer, artwork by William Metcalf and R Home's sophisticated Ribbon Console dress up the far end of this gracious entrance hall. Designer Michael Richman altered the apartment's original layout to create this long gallery for the owners' extensive art collection. Spotlights on a monorail track system, found at Lightology, are individually adjusted to give each piece its proper illumination.



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Richman says he always tries to create a conversation between interiors and architecture, and he's got quite a lively chat going on here. He's successfully mixed pieces from his own furniture line with contemporary furnishings—like the living room's Zephyr lounge chairs by Michael Berman—and some bona-fide '70s antiques, like the vintage coffee table by Willy Rizzo.

The building went up mid-Nixon in 1972, designed by Minoru Yamasaki. It was the last addition to a complex of company buildings instantly recognizable to Chicagoans for the startlingly beautiful, 23-foot-tall bronze the Spirit of Progress statue that tops the original executive offices. When it was announced the tower would be converted from office to residential, Richman's clients, Gary, senior vice president of Sotheby's Midwest, and Scott, a medical physicist with Varian Medical Systems, were among the first in line to secure a spot

CHEF'S SPECIAL

Richman chose Lines Quattro Cabinetry's graphite finish for lower cabinets and an off-white, high-gloss lacquer for upper cabinets to lift the room up and make it feel light. A silver satin-frosted mirrored backsplash and a gleaming stainless-steel hood over the Wolf cooktop were conceived by Richman and fabricated by Goldberg General Contracting. Countertops are durable Kashmir White granite. As a finishing touch, Richman covered the wood floor with Chilwich's Basketweave vinyl area rug.



FAST FORWARD

R Home's Z-Stripe table and credenza convey the feel of a 1970s vintage dining room set and pair beautifully with the 1972 Pileo floor lamp by Gae Aulenti and some of-the-moment Alster Chairs from Ligne Roset. The photograph of a cinema curtain by Joachim Scholz over the credenza echoes the gray of its stainless-steel stripe. A large photograph by Izma Kasu that dominates the far wall is a surprising pop of bright color amidst the room's subdued palette.

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It would be hard to imagine a more perfect set of clients for Richman. Much like their designer, the two are exceptionally creative thinkers. "We wanted the design here to be an homage to Yamasaki, not an exact copy," says Scott. "You can see that it's filled with things of today." Yes, like a truly astonishing modern art collection. "Their art is very contemporary but it's varied," says Richman. "Gary and Scott's style is the genius that pulls all this together."

Gary says when they first went up to visit their chosen space it had the feeling of a quickly evacuated office. "Our bedroom was an old conference room; you could even see where the coffee machine had stood for decades on a shelf." But, says Richman, getting involved so early in the building's development was half the fun. Gary and Scott decided to combine two units, giving them a roomy expanse of square footage and three bedrooms, and Richman called on Goldberg General Contracting in Chicago to make his carefully calibrated vision a reality. "No problem," says Goldberg's president Jake Goldberg. "We have a unique understanding of the language of design. We don't just approach things from a contractor's point of view."

Richman's most important recommendation to the pair was that they sacrifice a bathroom to make room for the large gallery that today gives the entrance such presence, not to mention a place to hang art. Next he suggested replacing all the traditional casement doors with translucent glass Poliform doors. "You can see a glow when someone is in a room with the door closed at night," says Richman. "It's so beautiful."



DESK JOB

The homeowner wanted an office "full of energy." To that end, Richman chose a cheery yellow desk by USM paired with Herman Miller's iconic Eames Management Chair. Windows are dressed in a Creation Baumann striped sheer from Niermann Weeks. Two-person chaise with laptop stand from Davis Furniture.



OVER AND ABOVE

A teak wall in Honolulu's Halekulani Hotel that the homeowners had admired while on vacation inspired the powder room's décor. Richman installed a curved ceiling covered in teak veneer panels and a glittering wall of taupe glass tile to play off the wood's grain. Embedded in the Absolute Black marble tile floor is a white Corian pathway that integrates seamlessly into the sink. A waterfall faucet emerges directly from the backlit mirror.

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A new 'hearth' for the television wall in the living room has a gleaming, cantilevered stainless-steel ledge where as many as six guests can perch at parties. "We had to have a structural engineer help us figure that one out," says Goldberg vice president Jeff Berry, "but it's fantastic." Fantastic also is the powder room Berry calls "the greatest powder room in all Chicago." He says he simply can't imagine where Richman's ideas comes from. "They're just so out there." For the room, Richman dreamed up a sink perfectly aligned with a strip of Corian embedded in an Absolute Black marble floor beneath a curving canopy of teak panels that arches overhead. "It's like a little chapel," laughs Richman.

It may just be the perfect place to light a candle to the '70s. Or better yet, how about some incense? **L**



INTERIOR FORESTRY

In the master bedroom, Richman kept leggy furniture to a minimum for simplicity and peace. The platform bed by Poliform has integral nightstands; R Home's Macau cabinet has a Lucite base. Artist Theaster Gates' Bench II, found at Kavi Gupta Gallery in Chicago, looks even more whimsical silhouetted against woody wallpaper. Dressed in Maharam's iconic Alexander Girard Quatrefoil fabric, the bed's throw pillows are a cheeky nod to the 1960s.