

Chicago Tribune Magazine

SEPTEMBER 11, 2005 • SECTION 10

INTERIORS

THE WOW FACTOR

BACHELOR SEEKS PAD WITH MID-CENTURY BELLS AND WHISTLES—PLUS THREE ADJACENT FLAT-SCREEN TVS

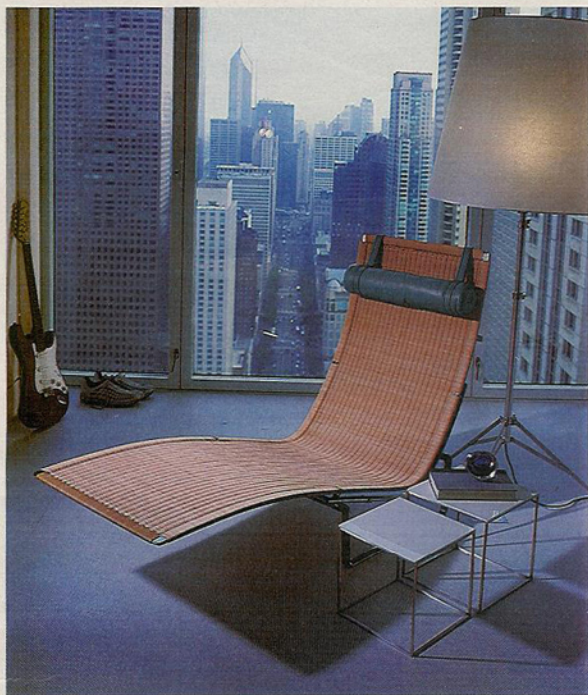
Not all bachelors eat their meals over the kitchen sink. The owner of this 4,800-square-foot aerie on North Michigan Avenue is a 32-year-old single business executive who sits down to dinner at a custom-made dining table surrounded by the works of modern furniture masters. ■ But when the owner first saw the apartment, decorated in 1984, it was a place only a fashion relic like Miami Vice's "Sonny Crockett" could love. ■ "It was hip but past its prime," says the owner in a bit of spectacular understatement. Canned lighting projected triangles and squiggly lines onto the entry floor, and a towering trapezoidal sculpture with a neon top overwhelmed the living room. The master bedroom was an 1980s

Three flat-screen televisions command the living room. The chaise swivels 360 degrees to take in the lake views or to watch TV. It and the sofa are from decorator Michael Richman's new furniture line, Richman Home. The two chairs in the foreground are by Mies van der Rohe.



BY LISA CREGAN
TRIBUNE PHOTOS BY BILL HOGAN





Top: A Poul Kjaerholm chaise circa 1965 and pair with an Italian floor lamp sits in front of the master bedroom's expansive city views. Below: The pattern of the area rug in the dining room, designed by Michael Richman, was inspired by the work of the late Austrian graphic designer, Herbert Bayer. Table and chairs were custom made and the stools at the kitchen island are by Harry Bertoina.

bachelor's homage to Hugh Hefner, with a black leather floor, funky laminate canopy bed, black curtains and black lights that turned anything white an unflattering fluorescent blue.

"It was done to the nines, but really horribly," says Chicago designer Michael Richman. So what could possibly attract a savvy guy to such a deliriously dated apartment?

"He liked how when you walked in, there was a 'wow' feeling to it," says Richman, referring to the apartment's spectacular city and lake views.

Knowing what design styles were unacceptable, the owner carefully interviewed seven designers before hiring Richman. "I didn't want to hear, 'No, you can't do that,'" says the owner. Nevertheless, his first design imperative might have immediately elicited that no-can-do response: A sports-marketing entrepreneur, he wanted three big-screen TVs in the living room.

"I needed to be able to watch three sporting events at once or a couple of sporting events and a movie. Michael was able to work around my needs," he says.

The owner hadn't planned to gut the place, says Richman, who has a background in architecture, but the client's interest was piqued when he saw the possibilities through Richman's eyes.

"Our first job was to figure out what his style was," says Richman, so he and his team devised a kind of fabric-and-furniture Rorschach test. They put together interior design show-and-tell boards, then watched their client's reaction.

After rejecting what Richman called the "Liaigre," a chic French modern milieu, and "Italian Sleek" with low sofas in the style of Milan, client and design team settled happily on "Comfortable Upholstery with Mid-Century Accents."

Richman reconfigured the apartment layout, designing custom furniture and helping the client assemble a jaw-dropping collection of vintage pieces, including a 1906 Antoni Gaudi bench and Frank Gehry's circa 1970 cardboard Wiggle Chair.

Stepping into the apartment today, a blood-red floating wall suspended a few feet off the floor commands immediate attention. Venetian plaster was mixed with oil paint, Italian fresco style, and artists from Hester Decorating spent two weeks applying layer upon layer of wax to give the wall a 3-D look.

"That floating wall was 100 percent Michael," says the homeowner. "It has more impact than I thought it would."

Richman retained a lighting consultant to design the colored lighting under the wet bar's backsplash. It slowly cycles from blues and purples to oranges and reds, or can be programmed to glow in just one color, like green for the owner's St. Patrick's Day bash.

The master bedroom got softly glowing LED pathways embedded in the floor, which was raised to take full advantage of the lake views. The guestroom, covered in a bold Wolf Gordon wallpaper, was intended to be a vivid foil to the minimalist master bedroom. A Lucite desk designed by Richman fits comfortably with a '60s Alvar Aalto chair and a Noguchi nightstand. "We wanted the room to be vibrant, funky, hip," says Richman.

Yes, it's all hip, but a bachelor still needs his Barcelounger. So Richman designed a chic liv-

Continued on page 36



The master bathroom's custom tub has a Thassos marble mosaic surround and looks out on the lake and the Palmolive Building. The stool is a Gerrit Rietveld Zig Zag Chair and the custom credenza was inspired by Florence Knoll.