

A Lesson in Less

High-rise studio becomes a live-in sculpture

Photo courtesy of Candice C. Cusic



Openness prevails in the studio. Other than an articulated wood kitchen island, cabinets and other accoutrements are held back to showcase a stunning high-floor view of Lake Michigan.

It is a place in the sky, a container for art and a sculpture to live in. If it sounds poetic it's because for Paul Tebben and Vladimir Radutny, co-founders of Chicago-based Studio IDE, this project represents that rare occasion when the client's brief is 98 percent aspiration and 2 percent function. This start-up firm was tasked with turning a studio apartment in Streeterville into an art form.

The client, a physician who lives and works in Las Vegas, has an atypical philosophy about art, space and life. Rather than taking a "one residence in one town" point of view, he looks to acquire both art and real estate in multiple geographies based on his personal

attachment to place. At one point, during a visit to Chicago, he purchased a portfolio of lithographs and corresponding poems entitled *One Cent Life*, produced in 1964 through the collaboration of 62 leading American Pop Artists and European Expressionists. From there, he set out to find the perfect Chicago setting to house the work.

In the 500-square-foot high-rise unit that he settled on, the program needs were simple: a place to sleep, eat and wash. "The challenge was to distill and simplify our ideas," Tebben explains. "For us, it became an exercise in editing and finding the balance in how reductive the living function can become before it turns useless."

Tebben and Radutny's response is a strategy that obscures the boundaries between spatial arrangements. "We created overlapping zones by staggering the flooring and ceiling materials and their heights," Tebben says. The outcome is that the kitchen zone is indistinct from the living zone through the abstraction of where one space starts and the other ends.

As you enter the space, the axial view is towards a northern 49th floor aperture looking onto Lake Shore Drive. The art collection is displayed along the length of the west elevation, perpendicular to the view. "We installed the framed lithographs on hinges to provide more surface area and pro-

motivate the client's (and his guests') ability to have physical interaction with the work," Radutny says.

The basic necessities of life like the dishwasher, television, closet and bathroom are intentionally concealed behind custom-designed metal cabinetry and panel doors obscured to continue the planar qualities of the walls. It's the hinging of the artwork, the custom nature of the cabinetry and the occasional quirky detail like carving a catchall bowl into the kitchen counter that give the space an interactive, memorable quality, while the purity of the forms distills the architecture in ways that negotiate that fuzzy line between the poetics of art and the art of living. → **Cindy Coleman**