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Conversion  
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STUFF

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# THE ART OF LIVING

by patricia mines



designer: studio IDE  
size: 500 square feet  
photography: candice c. cusic

***High above scenic Lake Shore Drive in the heart of Chicago is a diminutive habitat where art, beauty and function converge in the stunning renovation of a 500 square-foot condo***



Hinged  
framed  
artwork

When the dream job of transforming a small condo in Chicago's John Hancock Tower came their way, architects Vladimir Radutny and Paul Tebben of Studio IDE were giv-

en complete freedom to articulate their design concept. There was only one stipulation. The renovation had to center around the owner's artwork, a series of pop art lithographs, which turn out to be as impressive as the renovation designed to showcase them.

"Our main goal was to achieve balance between the livable space and the gallery space, says Radutny, a Ukrainian born architect who along with his partner began the renovation of Unit 4906 in September 2009.

The team's design philosophy of making every project meaningful while at the same time pushing contemporary design elements gave shape to their vision for the tiny condo. "The presence of a long, dim corridor leading to the main room was problematic and had to be transformed into a space that was more meaningful," says Radutny. A compact but highly functional bathroom along with two storage closets - for linen and clothing - now dominate the area and add further definition to the condo's unique design.

Faced with the challenge of creating additional light, the team designed a series of translucent and





View of  
kitchen from  
living room

clear glass panels in the kitchen and bathroom that allow for the passage of natural light throughout the condo's interior. "Light, whether artificial or natural, is a huge factor in maximizing the function of a space," says Radutny. The pair uses the natural light from the window overlooking Lake Michigan as their "aperture" and have chosen to maximize its use by installing side by side translucent and clear glass panels between the small shower and kitchen and two additional translucent panels wedged between the bathroom and hallway area. The re-

sult is a brighter space with a more spacious feel.

To create a minimalist and streamlined interior, the team designed several enclosures and cabinets that unify the aesthetic and conceal all evidence of everyday living. "All functional elements of open apartment living are hidden from view, allowing one to feel as though they've stepped into a gallery space wired for living rather than an apartment space equipped to display art," says Radutny.

The 1¼ inch white oak platform flooring used to define the gallery, kitchen and bathroom area conceals the wiring to the TV cabinet while the waist high enclosure surrounding the window hides the condo's heating and cooling unit.

Using the dramatic white walls as a backdrop allowed the architects to

create clean, modern and sleek white floor cabinets that are barely noticeable. The kitchen cabinets are used for both storage purposes and concealing the refrigerator, dishwasher, convection-microwave and media components. Recessed shelving in the bathroom creates storage solutions that easily blend into the walls without obstructing the bathroom's 45 square-foot interior.

Other space-saving features include a black TV cabinet containing a wall

mounted TV and surround sound speakers. Resembling a work of art rather than a cabinet filled with electronic equipment, its' see through moveable panel is encrypted with the morse code through which sound and images –from the TV – can be seen and heard.

Designing a condo to showcase the



iconic works of some of America's most prolific artists means incorporating building materials and furnishings that are visually stimulating and compliment the aesthetic. The use of a modern and stylish black stovetop and sink in the condo's kitchen creates a palette that blends rather deceptively into the



black countertop. The impeccably decorated interior showcases a stunning collection of eclectic pieces. A multi functioning white Danish sofa by Innovation doubles as a bed and sits across from a cocktail table of recycled newspapers, a piece that adds texture and style to the gallery/living room area. A painting by Israeli experimental artist Yaakov Agam hangs above the Danish sofa and shares the interior with the classical lines of a 1952 Diamond Chair by Italian furniture designer Harry Bertoia.

At the center of the renovation is the famed 1964 One Cent Life Portfolio Book containing the iconic images by artists like Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein and Robert Rauschenberg. Displayed in double-sided hinged frames along the condo's west wall, the lithographs provide the focal point around which the condo is designed. "Because the lithographs are hung in double sided frames that are hinged, you can change the configuration of the art," said Radutny. "Changing the config-

urations means creating a more dynamic focal point."

With the dramatic views of Lake

Michigan just beyond its' windows, Unit 4906 is the ultimate in artistic expression. Architecturally, Studio IDE incorporated design techniques that successfully conceal the elements of everyday living, maximize and brighten the interior and incorporate the art of some of the most recognizable artists of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



