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SQUARE  
FEET

## ONE-BEDROOM APARTMENT

Turn a blank white box into an artful aerie in the city

Bold graphics, clear color, and vibrant art add pow in the living room of a Chicago apartment by New York architectural consultants Richard Bories and James Shearron for public relations executive Guillermo Zalamea. Navy Zig Zag dhurries from Madeline Weinrib—used to upholster barrel-back 1950s armchairs—echo the folding screen. Walls are Benjamin Moore's Stonington Gray. Oil painting by Paul Lorenz. OPPOSITE: An Ellsworth Kelly-inspired graphic on entry closet doors.





The living room is dominated by windows with sweeping views of Lincoln Park. In this sunlit space, sculptural furniture collected by the homeowner seems to float. Limed oak armchair from Mecox Gardens. Warren Platner side table

by Knoll. The white lacquer coffee table is a custom design large enough to accommodate books above and below. Cowhide atop wall-to-wall sisal from Carpet One delineates the dining area, which is sometimes used as a workstation.

**LISA CREGAN:** What a great apartment! But did you ever have a moment of panic thinking all your beautiful things weren't going to fit into this space?

**GUILLERMO ZALAMEA:** That's where my friends Dick and James came in. They drew up a fantastic plan to renovate this place. And their advice about where to put things and what to buy was critical because I just can't help myself—Chicago is such a treat to shop! There are shopkeepers here who have so much style. Somehow Richard and James made this small space great for displaying my collections.

**So, Richard, exactly how did you and James do that?**

**RICHARD BORIES:** Well, first we made the background seamless, so that the walls felt like gallery walls. We got rid of all the trim and moldings. We even used hidden hinges and touch latches to make closet doors disappear. Essentially, we made the living room and bedroom into flat gray boxes so Guillermo can move his art around as much as he wants. It looks good everywhere.

**So then why does this place seem like such a far cry from a cold art gallery?**

**JAMES SHEARRON:** In small, modern apartments you have to create dramatic moments that offset the lack of detail—but don't hog space. So we painted the front door high-gloss yellow and lacquered the bedroom ceiling this fabulous dark blue that's almost black, like the midnight sky. And in the entry, we had the coat closet painted to look like an eight-foot-high, nine-foot-long Ellsworth Kelly painting. Bold, graphic gestures like that look cool in small spaces.

**Like the living room chairs, covered in big zigzags?**

**JS:** They're upholstered in Madeline Weinrib rugs! Aren't they great? We could never have found a fabric with such a big-scale pattern. And the chairs' zigzags and this long, low screen feel kinetic here. A sofa against a plain wall in a corner is stagnant. The screen snakes around the lamp just a bit, so the corner isn't sad and dead. It's friendlier.

**RB:** And we put another small screen, painted yellow, on the other side of the room to hide the radiator. Two screens have more impact than one. They keep your eye moving around.

**Are screens kind of a trademark for you?**

**JS:** Actually, we'd be laughed out of the design industry if we didn't give credit to Jean-Michel Frank. He did these snaky screens to great effect. And then there are all the painted screens you see in English interiors. This isn't a new concept.

**Okay, but putting a table smack in front of the view isn't something one sees every day.**

**JS:** From the day they invented the modern high-rise, people have put the sofa in the window and the dining table in a corner near the entrance to the kitchen, right?

**RB:** But if you silhouette a large-scale piece of furniture—like this Saarinen table—against the view, the windows won't read as one big, overwhelming mass of glass. And when you look up from the street, you see the table with Guillermo's gorgeous display of all the things he loves.

**GZ:** I like to set up my laptop there and work. I just stack my papers on that little white woven stool.

**The other thing every high-rise apartment has is a tall bookshelf for the television. Why not here?**

**JS:** Because that would close off the space. This low credenza is more unexpected. In architecture like this, influenced by Mies, it's very effective to keep things low and punctuate with verticals here and there—there's this low blue sofa and, suddenly, there's a high column.

**GZ:** I don't miss having a bookshelf, either. I keep most of my books on the coffee table, and there are more in the credenza. Magazines go on the African chair. It's the perfect solution for me.

**And why wall-to-wall sisal instead of wood floors?**

**JS:** Sisal underfoot is simply so much warmer than the vast expanses of wood developers do these days. And you can layer anything you want on top of it. It's a lot easier than trying to find a gigantic rug.

**Tell me about this little jewel of a kitchen.**

**JS:** It's clearly not for someone with a family. But for a single man who doesn't need much? It's ideal.

**RB:** It's actually my favorite room. We took out big cabinets that blocked the view and installed open shelves to expand the space. They also give Guillermo another place to display his things.

**GZ:** I like the way little shocks of color—purple goblets and green tumblers—look on these white shelves.

**Was it hard to come to a consensus on color?**

**JS:** Luckily, all three of us gravitate to crisp, clear colors—true navy, true yellow, a very clear gray. The bedroom's blanket is an honest red—not burgundy, not mauve. We started with these clear gray walls, and then we thought yellow looked good with it, and so yellow happened at the front door. Then we layered in some blue. And we thought, 'Why didn't we think of blue before?' It was an evolution.

**I think it's fair to say this place is now fully evolved. Did you agree on everything along the way?**

**GZ:** See that column with the Chinese vase? I tried it everywhere in the living room. Dick and James kept saying, 'Put it in front of the window,' and I kept saying, 'I'm not going to do that.' I was really fixated on the view.

**JS:** We thought in that spot the column would be a surprise—kind of a folly to help warm up the architecture.

**GZ:** So one day, out of curiosity, I put it there. And I realized that, as usual, they'd been right all along.



1. The intriguing objects displayed on the Eero Saarinen table include Restoration Hardware's Counterpoise task lamp. 2. The front door is highlighted with Benjamin Moore's Bright Yellow on the back. 3. Bories and Shearron designed the oak credenza, which hides the television and is a handsome alternative to the standard tall bookcase. 4. Large art is displayed informally by layering pieces on the floor against the wall. Giraffe painting by Benoit Tschieret. 5. A floor-to-ceiling curtain in gray cotton twill from Beckenstein's blends with the bedroom walls. 6. Tiny vintage porcelain Stig Lindberg vases are displayed on a Fornasetti plate. 7. An African chair serves as a magazine rack. 8. Handmade bowl by Rina Menardi. 9. A clear glass panel keeps a tiny bathroom from feeling crowded by a curtain. 10. Tiffany's Elsa Peretti Thumbprint bowl floats on the marble top of the Saarinen table.



Upper cabinets that blocked the view were replaced with open shelves. Under-counter refrigerator and freezer units from U-Line and lacquered cabinets from Ikea allow for an unbroken expanse of Absolute Black granite. The elaborately curved 19th-century

Portuguese dining chair—upholstered in equally intricate Coppelia from Clarence House—contrasts with the horizontal slats of venetian blinds. Clover ceiling fixture from Lampa. OPPOSITE: Vintage photography and colored glassware in the otherwise white tableau.





The bedroom is a study in contrasts. The ceiling, painted in Farrow & Ball's high-gloss Hague Blue, appears even more reflective above the soft matte texture of the red Hudson Bay blanket by Woolrich. The ornately carved midcentury Italian starburst mirror punctuates the plain expanse of wall painted Benjamin Moore's Coventry Gray. Glimmering nailheads outline Hickory Chair's Chelsea Bed by Thomas O'Brien. OPPOSITE: Every color in the apartment can be found in the entry hall's Turkish rug, from ABC Carpet & Home. The designers had the hollow-core bedroom door painted in black lacquer "to give it a sense of quality." FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES