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## LIVE FROM LAKEVIEW!

*News flash! Don Lemon's sweet Chicago bachelor pad is a Mid-Century masterpiece*

BY AMALIE DRURY PHOTOGRAPHY BY TONY SOLURI

For three years, Don Lemon has lived in Chicago and co-anchored the local NBC station's five o'clock newscast. During those same three years, he has been renovating a two-bedroom condo in a Mies van der Rohe building on Diversey Parkway—the kind of place where you step in the door and ignore everything else until you've had your fill of the view, a postcard panorama that sweeps across Lake Michigan, Lincoln Park and the city skyline.

Now, with his dream home finally finished, Lemon has been offered a job as an anchor at CNN in Atlanta. It's too good a move to pass up, but boy, will he miss that view. Or not. Lemon isn't quite ready to let go of his Windy City ties, and he keeps talking about how he might hang onto the place. Meanwhile, with his move to Atlanta slated for this month, he is determined to enjoy his oasis as much as possible.

Designers James Dolenc and Thomas Riker of jamesthomas have gutted and reconfigured the 1,500-square-foot condo in an effort to optimize the available space and do away with the choppy, closed-off feel that was the result of too many walls and doors in the previous three-bedroom scheme. After going back and forth about possible floor plans for months, Dolenc, the lead designer on the project, sketched yet another concept in the car on the way to one of their client meetings. Minutes later, he presented it to Lemon, who said: "Great! I'll do that. Done."

Lemon still has that original sketch, and it shows the condo as an open space that revolves around a free-standing "core," which houses the master bathroom and dressing area. The walls of the core are made of opaque laminated glass, and if the bathroom light is on, anyone in the master or guest bedrooms can see the faint outline of whomever might be showering. "It's very hot," says Dolenc.

There are no mirrors, just glass, above the two sinks in the master bath (one must turn around to the mirrors behind to check for toothpaste residue). "But that doesn't bother me," says Lemon, gearing up for his best *Anchorman*/Ron Burgundy impression: "Cause I already know I look good. Really good!"

**Left:** In the living room, the pale green raw silk drapes by G&W Window Treatments are rarely pulled closed to conceal the fantastic view. The room contains several of Lemon's Mid-Century Modern pieces, including an Edward Wormley sofa and vintage coffee table from Modern Times.

*THE WALLS OF THE CORE ARE MADE OF OPAQUE LAMINATED GLASS, AND IF THE BATHROOM LIGHT IS ON, ANYONE IN THE MASTER OR GUEST BEDROOMS CAN SEE THE FAINT OUTLINE OF WHOMEVER MIGHT BE SHOWERING.*







**Left:** Contractors Brooks & Brooks Inc. performed the demo and buildout, including the free-standing master bath and dressing area that form the “core” of the floorplan. All millwork is by Creative Wood Concepts. **Above:** No bedroom door means a clear view from the living room to the west-facing windows in the master bedroom. Lemon’s own vintage touches—the silver hubcaps on the wall; the African tribal stool—contrast with a rosewood Knoll dining table and iconic Saarinen tulip chairs.

The same white Carrera marble used for the bathroom countertops appears again in the kitchen. “We kept the design to just four main elements: the Sapelli wood of the millwork, the espresso-stained red oak of the floors, the glass and the marble,” says Dolenc. “Doing that helps to unify a small space.”

Also in the kitchen, the original gray metal Mies van der Rohe cabinets have been cleaned and re-powder-coated. In an inventive use of pre-existing materials, one section of the cabinets was removed and pressed into service as a floating credenza for storing electronics in the living room. “I loved being able to do that,” says Dolenc. Years ago, when







Lemon was working his way up the TV ladder in New York, he came to a realization about furniture: "You should buy things that have value," he says. "Furniture is an investment that you can sit on, and that you can sell if you ever need the money."

Much of Lemon's furniture has been collected through stories he has covered for work. As an up-and-coming producer at FOX in New York, he was in charge of a regular segment called "Trash to Treasure," which

**Left: Mies van der Rohe's original cabinetry remains intact in the kitchen; the 'Lem' bar stools are from Design Within Reach. Above: A map-of-the-world mural was painted above Lemon's bed by an artist he discovered while researching a story about the website Craigslist for NBC 5 news. The master bed was custom designed by Jamestomas; the guest bed linens are made from tribal panels Lemon brought home from a trip to Africa. A corner of the master bath shower is visible between the two bedrooms.**

required him to scour the Salvation Army and Goodwill in search of cool pieces that had been neglected but could easily be revived. If he liked a piece that was featured, he simply paid for it rather than send it back.

Lemon developed an eye for the Mid-Century Modern aesthetic, and soon found himself haggling over a pair of chairs being sold on the sidewalk in Brooklyn (he paid \$50 for both) and insisting on carting an old Edward Wormley sofa out of the back room of an antiques store for \$200. "The shop owners were like, 'You don't want that,'" says Lemon. "I was like, 'Trust me, I do!'"

From a designer's point of view, Lemon was not a typical client. "He obviously had a clear and honed direction," says Dolenc. But the final result is a true collaboration: a comfortable melding of Lemon's treasured possessions with the clean, cohesive vision of his design team. "These guys are at the beginning of the 'new wave' in the way people live," says Lemon. "All I know is they'd better come do my place in Atlanta." ■

*Styling by Elissa Raymond for Ford Artists. Floral arrangements provided by Blumgarten & Co. [www.blumgarten.com](http://www.blumgarten.com)*