

the ultimate in luxurious living and design

decoration

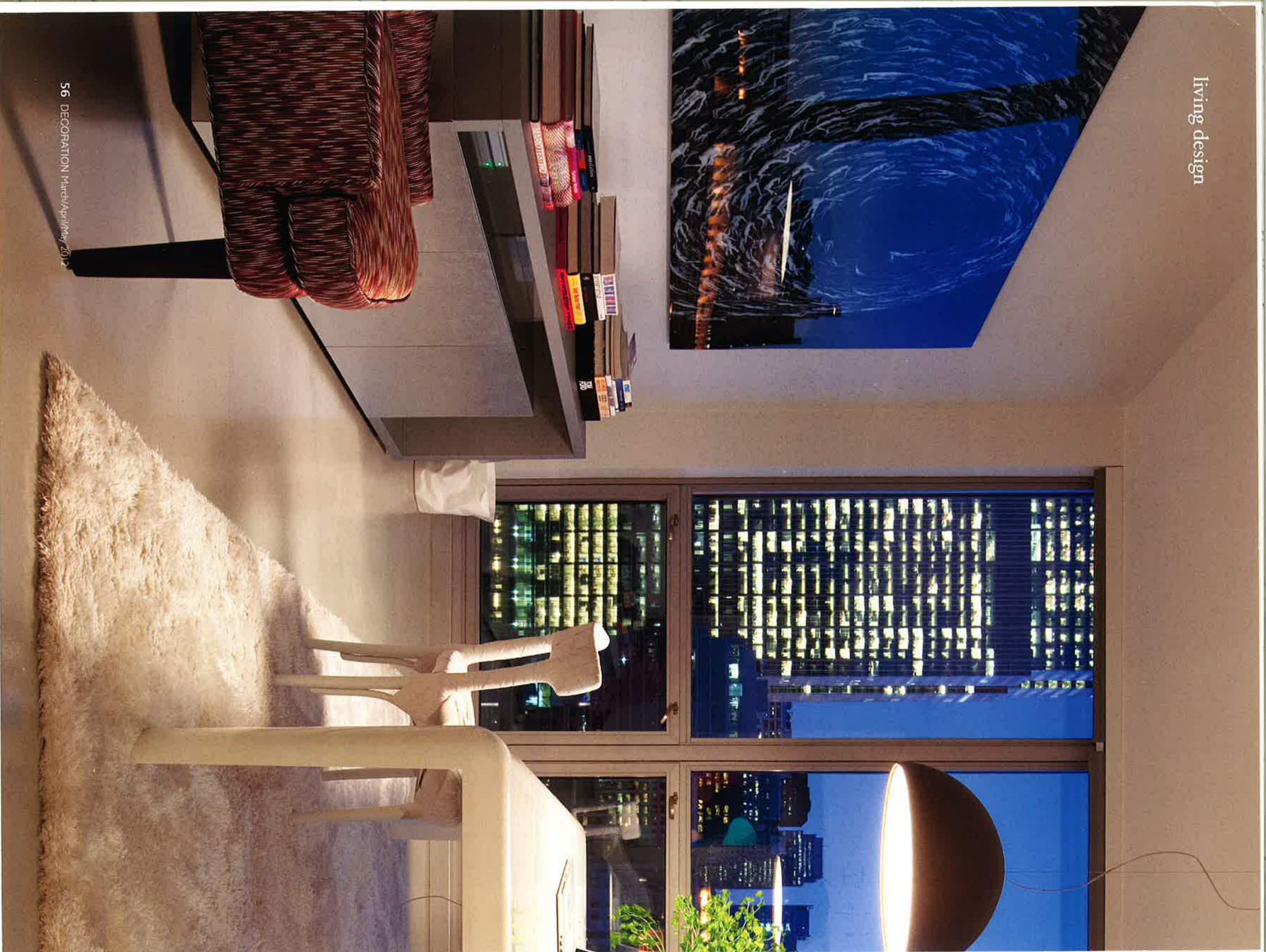
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Contemporary
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Maria Yee

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UNIQUE Chicago Design

Founded in 2003 by partners in design, James Dolenc and Thomas Riker, interior design firm James Thomas is today a highly successful and prominent name in the world of interior design. The Chicago firm had their work cut out for them in the rework of this generous penthouse located on the West side of the city and have managed to create an original and subtly funky bachelor pad.





Please describe the apartment

The apartment is located on the near west side of Chicago in the area called "River West", in a building that was built around 10 years ago. It is on the 24th floor and takes up that entire floor. The surface is roughly 4,500 square feet. We completed this renovation in 2009.

Who are the owners of the penthouse?

The home is owned by a British bachelor. He is a commodities trader here in Chicago for an international firm.

Do you follow a design method when decorating?

We really tend to follow the direction and aesthetics of each client. We want the home to represent the homeowner not us. We see our job as helping our client to define and synthesize their personal aesthetic.

Were there any major overhauls that were done, architecturally, if so what?

Yes. We removed a lot of built-in cabinetry throughout the home. We lowered the ceilings in the main living space to allow for recessed lighting. We completely reworked the 'his and hers' master bedrooms into one unified large master bath. We added white lacquered millwork (built-ins) into the space to help create the





loft/art gallery look that the owner wanted.

What is your 'design' the starting point ?

Before starting any project, we ask the client to show us pictures that represent how they want their space to feel, how they want to live in it and that convey their own specific tastes, desires, dreams, etc. From this we gain an understanding of the client and can then start designing a space that reflects this information.

From where do you draw your inspiration when you design?

As mentioned above, in a first instance we are inspired by our clients ideas and wishes. In a more general way we are inspired by travel, art and other designer's work who we admire.

Do you follow a central look or theme for the entire space, or do you treat each room differently?

For this home it was important to have a unifying element. The floors are consistent throughout the space – polished concrete floors stained a light

grey. While there is definitely a rhythm to the entire space and it does flow easily from one space to the next – each room is unique. The entry foyer is covered in a very loud floral wall covering – it really pops. The main living spaces utilize some of those same colors but in a more subtle way. The library is more cozy and darker.

Are you a believer of central color schemes?

We do like to keep colors to a minimum. There is nothing worse than walking from room to room and being assaulted with a new color in each space – it is very jarring and disturbing.

Take us on a design tour of the apartment

The main living space is huge so we were confronted with how to create a series of seating areas. We ended up custom designing an S shaped sectional sofa that allows for three different seating groups. It is very unique. We chose neutral colors for the background and popped in very bright colors in small doses. This is actually the design technique we used on all the rooms – just in different ways using different colors.



**Left: The 'S' Sofa was custom designed for the main living area.
Below: Pops of color were used throughout the apartment.**

"Whilst there is definitely a rhythm to the entire space and it flows easily from one space to the next, each room is unique."

The library is our modern take on an English paneled library. We selected a chevron pattern wood wall covering to create the look of wood walls but in an updated way. We put an old beat up oriental style rug on the concrete floor to add texture and dimension.

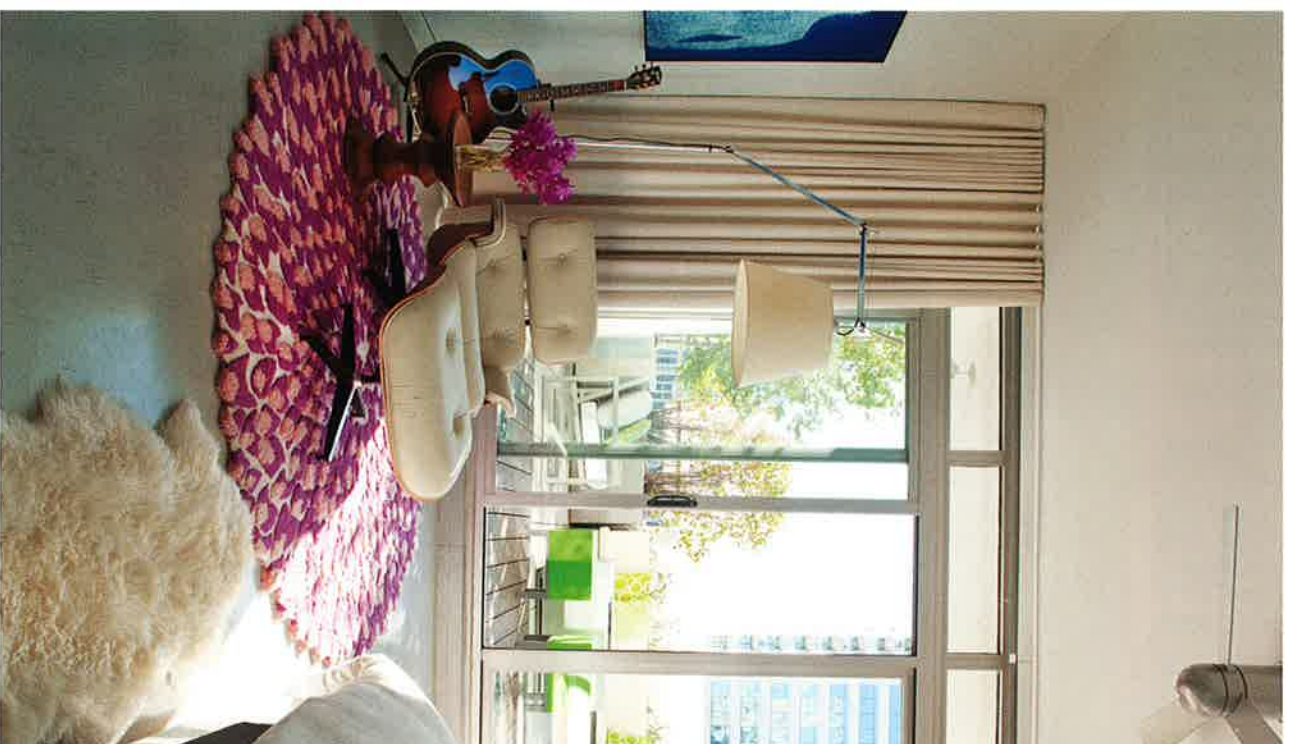
All of the artwork is the client's personal collection – we did not assist in purchasing.

How would you describe the apartment? Did you achieve the look that you wanted?

The client loves his home. It is great place to showcase his fabulous art collection. We describe it as very poppy and fun while still being sophisticated and chic. Not very often do you have a client who is willing to take risks in color and texture – so that was very rewarding and helped to push us creatively.

What is your favorite feature of the apartment and why?

We love the entry. The graphic wall covering in very bold colors – it sets the tone for the apartment as soon as you walk in. You know that this is not your run of the mill Chicago home!



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