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Vim & Vigor

Filled with color and wit,
a Chicago bachelor pad
oozes playful personality.

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hen faced with the unconventional, designer Lauren Svenstrup always feels right at home. She built a career composing personal (and personable) spaces

that honor the idiosyncrasies of every client. So Svenstrup knew she had a true partner in crime the moment she stepped inside this Chicago bachelor's high-rise penthouse. The new space was bare—except for dozens of balloons gently bouncing around. Abhorring the plain white box of his apartment, the client had them delivered to fill the abode with buoyant color. “I realized then that bringing quirk and whimsy into his space was important,” the designer recalls.

“My day job is very numbers focused,” the client explains. “So when I’m outside of work, I enjoy expressing my artistic side.” Inspired by this playful spirit, the designer focused on infusing the owner’s joie de vivre into every corner of the home.

Color proved key, beginning with coating the foyer in a lacquered black. Borrowing from Frank Lloyd Wright’s love of architectural contraction and expansion, Svenstrup wanted to conjure a cocoon-like entrance that would swell into the living room’s abundant light and space, making the transition much more impactful.

In the main living area itself, “we wanted a wall color that would be a continuation of the sky,” the designer says, so her team visited the space multiple times in different weather to find just the right shade of pale blue. Chicago decorative artist Erin Murphy then covered the industrial support beam with a faux silver-leaf finish that diffuses the sunlight and composed a ceiling mural of floating abstract forms in white and gray. In turn, the designer favored jewel hues and fabrics “with lots of luster” for the furnishings, from the salmon-velvet sofa to the green-vellum coffee table.

Pink found its way into the main bedroom as well. With its blush walls and snowy shag rug, the space contradicts modern expectations of a bachelor pad—think minimalist, monochromatic and sleek. Yet paired with black-metal accents and chocolate-velvet upholstery, the overall effect feels sophisticated without sacrificing lighthearted frivolity. As for the color choice,

“there was a lot of ‘why not?’ in this project,” Svenstrup notes. “He is very into fashion and is not afraid of color and texture.”

This haute couture sensibility also generated some outside-the-box choices in silhouettes. “I naturally gravitate toward a sculptural approach, but the client’s preferences leaned even more so toward that,” the designer says. “He wasn’t focused on oversize comfort pieces, so we wanted his furniture to feel like art.” As such, they range from sharp Cubist shapes to sinuous, expressive lines. See the bedroom’s asymmetrical butterfly headboard and the entry’s geometric rug. The dining area in particular revels in eccentricities, from the triangular chairs to the mismatched pendant chandelier to the bulbous banquette perfectly curved around the corner. Appropriately, the surreal Miss Aniela photograph *White Witch Awakening* enjoys pride of place here as well, a window into an interior filled with a live zebra running amok amid taxidermic animals. The client instantly fell in love with it, and the image became a frequent reference point “because it captures what I was trying to create here, where there’s always something that’s a little unexpected,” he explains.

The photo also became the centerpiece for the art collection he curated with Svenstrup, favoring diverse mixed-media works and odd objets d’art like two giant tessellated marble globes. Each piece was carefully placed to enhance its unique qualities. The Michael Rex wire sculpture, for example, dangles by the window to cast dramatic shadows across the living room. And the bubble-gum hues of a Grecian-inspired nude tapestry by artist Mia Weiner perfectly melt into the bedroom’s pink walls. Svenstrup also commissioned maker Brittany Sazonoff to create the Yves Klein-inspired blue blocks, a wall installation that integrates into the existing kitchen’s modular lines.

Layered in eye-catching details, the home feels a far cry from its white-walled origins—though the client still occasionally fills the apartment with balloons, along with many party guests. The home finally suits the lively festivities unraveling inside its walls. “It’s fun to finally share this view and space with others,” he says. And for Svenstrup, there’s no greater pleasure “than seeing our client in their element, how something we designed so perfectly embodies who they are.” ■



Bold shapes and hues underscore this avant-garde Chicago bachelor pad. Lacquered in Benjamin Moore's Blacktop, the foyer features an oblong Noir mirror and a CAI Designs stool accented with a jaunty suede fringe.



Above: In the art-laden living and dining spaces, Svenstrup favored sculptural furnishings. Here, a Siriano Interiors dining chair and France & Son swivel chair covered in Dedar's Tiger Mountain motif set off a cast-bronze sculpture by Dominique Mercy and fiber art by Lauren Williams.

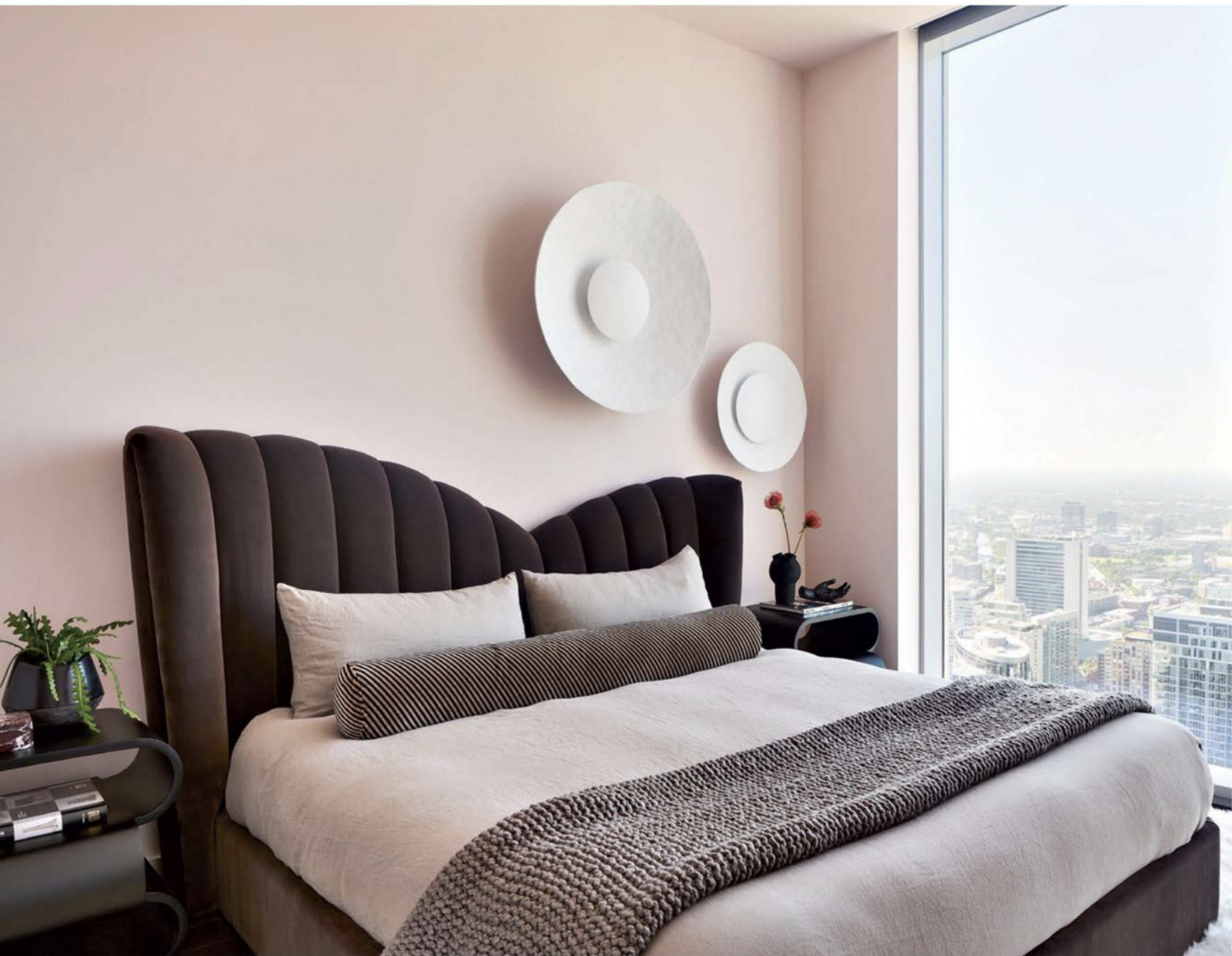
Opposite: The surreal *White Witch Awakening* photograph by Miss Aniela anchors the dining area. A mismatched Ladies & Gentlemen Studio chandelier and custom banquette by CityLiving Design, which curves around a Nuevo dining table, add to the playful vibe.



Above: Svenstrup elevated the already-sleek kitchen with glossy black barstools. Local artisan Brittany Sazonoff's custom block installation coated in Rosco's Supersaturated Ultramarine Blue infuses a sense of whimsy.

Opposite: Immediately upon entering the foyer, visitors are gifted with a peek into unexpected design moments grounded by a Jaipur Living rug. An Arteriors chandelier and framed mixed-media artworks by Dana De Ano punctuate the space.





Above: Embracing the abundance of light, the main bedroom glows with its Victorian Lace by Benjamin Moore walls further illuminated by the disk-shaped sconces from CAI Designs. Svenstrup paired the asymmetrical headboard by Comfort Upholstery with twin Noir side tables.

Opposite: The woven tapestry *Returning your gaze* by artist Mia Weiner hangs over two vintage tessellated marble globes in the main bedroom. A lush white Wiersma shag rug lies underfoot with "a 1970s vibe that I love," the client says.

