

LIVING IN COLOR

NOTHING IS GRANDMOTHERLY ABOUT THIS PIED-À-TERRE DESIGNED FOR . . . A GRANDMOTHER

When you think outside the box, living in one may have unexpected consequences. North Shore resident Molly Lazar, a 70-something granny of eight who “marches to the beat of my own drummer,” learned this firsthand when she bought a one-bedroom condominium on the Gold Coast two years ago from her then-new daughter-in-law, Jessica Tampas. ■ “I wanted to spend more time in the city and she wanted to sell it, so it seemed like it would be a good deal for both of us. I planned to throw a mattress on the floor and some paint on the walls, and it would be fine,” recalls Lazar. ■ It wasn’t. Her innate predilection for stylish surroundings prevailed. “I like things with color and flair. It took me about five minutes to realize I couldn’t live that way. Plus this is my second adulthood, and I want it to be fun,” she says. ■ She asked Tampas for help, and “about 10 minutes later she fixed me up with an interior designer,” jokes Lazar. That was Rebecca Pogonitz, who heads the Skokie-based design firm Schema Interiors. ■ Pogonitz has vivid memories of the introduction. “The first thing she said to me when I met her was: ‘I want lots of color, and the furniture has



A bold color palette is the starting point in this apartment, but different textures—evident in the fabrics and furnishings—add dimension, complexity and depth.

BY LISA SKOLNIK | TRIBUNE PHOTOS BY BILL HOGAN

"I LIKE THINGS WITH COLOR AND FLAIR. THIS IS MY SECOND CHILDHOOD, AND I WANT IT TO BE FUN."

—MOLLY LAZAR, HOMEOWNER



to be creative and engaging. I want to hang out here with my girlfriends and have fun.' It wasn't what I expected to hear from a grandmother of eight, but she's not exactly typical," says Pogonitz, laughing.

Indeed, Lazar seems to cover a lot of new ground at her age. She reads voraciously and plays bridge, which is not that unusual, but also works out at Curves, buys almost everything online, lives in Levi's and is leading a trip to Cuba this winter for a group from Northwestern University's Institute for Learning in Retirement at the School of Continuing Studies.

Nor is Pogonitz your typical designer, which may explain why the two hit it off immediately. "I think outside of the box and she does too, so we were a perfect match," says Lazar, who gave Pogonitz carte blanche, "though there was a budget," Pogonitz hastens to add.

Given their simpatico mindsets, it's not surprising that Pogonitz had some strong opinions about how to proceed on the job too. "I wanted to make it different than her primary residence on the North Shore, which is eclectic and has colorful art rather than colorful furnishings," she says. Since Lazar is a widow and only had

to please herself, Pogonitz also thought it would be interesting to make the place feminine and curvaceous to offset its bland appearance and boxy bones.

So with color, gender and curves in mind, she set out to make the plain little condo remarkable. The first thing she did was pick a daring color palette of aqua, tangerine, chartreuse and hot pink, "which inspired all my other choices," she explains.

Next came the standard-issue kitchen, which was ripped out. To stay on budget, she splurged in some areas and scrimped in others, and the kitchen was where she first applied this strategy. She used sleek though economical white laminate cabinets and let the kitchen design firm lay the room out using computer-aided design software. She clad the walls in opalescent Italian tiles in a resonant hue of Mandarin orange.

To anchor the living space and set the right tone, a curvy, kidney-bean-shaped sofa was rescued on the cheap from a Lake View thrift shop, and resuscitated sumptuously with an expensive, shimmery, hot-pink crushed velvet from Osborne & Little. Affordable contemporary barrel chairs were covered in equally plush cut velvet and cowhide in boldly contrasting hues. Contemporary dining chairs and a banquette were outfitted in the same crushed velvet as the

Lisa Skolnik, a city editor for Metropolitan Home magazine, writes frequently for the Magazine.



Molly Lazar, opposite, is as colorful as her apartment. The sheer linen drapes in the dining area wrap beyond the living area windows, unifying the color palette.

“I THINK OUTSIDE OF THE BOX AND SHE DOES TOO,
SO WE WERE A PERFECT MATCH.”

—REBECCA POGONITZ, DESIGNER



By exaggerating the proportions of the upholstered headboard, it becomes the focal point of the room and unifies all the elements in other hues.

sofa, but this time the hot pink was paired with Mandarin orange, while translucent aqua linen drapes striped with the other colors in the palette were used to tie all the elements together. The walls were painted a similar shade of aqua to match, but also given a quirky treatment to keep things interesting. “We used alternating stripes of flat and semi-gloss to get a subtle striped effect,” explains Pogonitz.

An ugly cement floor was replaced with a deep ebonized parquet. It was topped with an area carpet of white wool sisal so the floor would both contrast and compliment all the color in the room. “It did wonders to make the colors pop,” says Pogonitz.

Lighting was equally dramatic and cunningly devised. A sculpture of crystal shards was wired with Christmas lights to become a floor lamp in the living room, and a blown glass chandelier in a blood orange as bold as the chairs was hung over the dining room table.

Given all the heat and excitement the bright colors and bold pieces generated in the one-room living and dining area, Pogonitz chose tables with metal bases and sleek glass tops to round out the furniture wardrobe in the room. “It’s a relatively small space with a lot going on. This makes the tables lighter and less conspicuous, and at the same time adds a smooth, soothing

texture to the place,” she explains.

The bedroom followed the same template as the living area, with a huge headboard covered in a vibrant print serving as the anchor of the space and hot-pink cotton drapes patterned with all the other hues in the room used to tie the elements together. A cream carpet, white bedspread and dark wood furniture provided a sharp contrast to all the color, just as the two-tone floor did in the living area.

Today, Lazar is so smitten with the place that she’s the only one allowed to use it. No middle-age children, no teenage grandsons and no friends. Unless they’re invited over for a girl’s night out, that is. □

RESOURCES Interior design: Rebecca Pogonitz, Schema Interiors, Skokie; **Living room:** Sofa—thrift store no longer open, covered in crushed velvet—Osborne & Little Inc., Merchandise Mart, Chicago; Platner coffee table—Knoll, Mart; barrel chairs and pink cowhide on chairs—CAI Designs, Mart; cut velvet on chairs and pillows—Osborne & Little Inc.; pillows—fabricated by Elizabeth Sowinski, Bloomingdale, Ill.; mirror—personal collection; carpet—BeePee Sales & Interiors, Chicago; decorative painter—Cox & Co., Chicago. **Dining room:** Mirror—personal collection; dining chairs and banquette—T.C.D. Company, Merchandise Mart; crushed velvet on chairs and banquette—Osborne & Little Inc., Mart; dining table—CAI Designs, Mart; chandelier—Grange Furniture, Mart; linen drapes—fabric from Osborne & Little, fabricated by Elizabeth Sowinski, Bloomingdale, Ill.; decorative painter—Cox & Co. **Bedroom:** Headboard—fabricated by Elizabeth Sowinski, Bloomingdale, Ill.; chair and ottoman—T.C.D. Company, Merchandise Mart; fabrics for headboard, bolster, easy chair and drapes—Osborne & Little, Mart; bolsters and drapes—fabricated by Elizabeth Sowinski, Bloomingdale, Ill.; chest—personal collection; sconces—Grange Furniture, Mart.