

A realtor turns a standard condo into a personalized space with show-home appeal. Written by Christy Wright | Photography by Stacey Brandford

# an entertaining setup

**IT BEGAN WITH AN INVITATION TO DINNER.** Paul Maranger, a Toronto-based realtor, was at a dinner party a fellow agent was hosting at her downtown condo. The condo wasn't for sale, but something about it appealed to Paul. "There were some conventional, unattractive features, like the low, sprayed-stucco ceilings, but overall I was impressed by its spaciousness," he says. When the condo went on the market six months later, Paul snapped it up.

"Removing the stucco and replastering the ceilings were at the top of the renovation list," he says. "I wanted to personalize the space, so I gutted it and started with a clean slate." He enlisted close friend and interior designer Liz Gabaldo to advise on the overall design and furnishings, and hired a construction project manager, Dan Robinson, to oversee the renovations. "This was my first condo," says Paul. "The construction and condo regulations proved to be more complicated than I expected, so a project manager was a necessity."

A busy realtor, Paul works seven days a week and wanted a space that would be comfortable and maintenance-free. "It had to be welcoming and easily accommodate an intimate dinner or weekend cocktail party," he says. His list of must-haves included an island, dining room, guest room and lots of storage ("I'm a clothes horse," he says). ▶

An accent wall in the dining room is painted Paul's favourite colour – Farrow & Ball's Chinese Blue. The pendant light is from Italy, and the chairs, with extra-wide seats and good back support, were chosen specifically for comfort and to encourage lingering.



"I wanted a space that was sleek and modern, but also wanted to avoid the coldness that's often associated with modern style"



**ABOVE** Paul's flair for combining contrasting elements is evident in the living room's mix of pieces: a geometric-pattern area rug, rich silk drapes (which hide solar blinds), traditional artwork and modern furniture. **ABOVE RIGHT** Sitting in his favourite club chair, Paul enjoys the view from the 17th floor. "To the right is a spectacular view of the downtown skyline, and to the left, with a bit of imagination and a twist of your head," he says laughing, "you can see Lake Ontario." **BELOW RIGHT** An antique burl walnut buffet from Paul's former dining room suite is right at home near a contemporary, Asian-inspired bench, and framed etchings by artist Patricia Karen Gagic. They're positioned between the dining room and bar area, and create a tableau of interesting contrasts that attract the eye. ▶



BENJAMIN MOORE  
STORMY MONDAY

The guest room is used maybe five times a year; the rest of the time, it serves as a casual reading and TV space. Extra-high etched-glass doors, attached at the top to a steel rack, slide shut to form a privacy wall.



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New ceilings, recessed halogen lighting, hardwood floors and strong colours give the condo a sleek feel. In the kitchen, Paul opted for a marble floor and dark wood cabinets inspired by ones he'd seen in a magazine. Extending from floor to ceiling, they

provide plenty of storage space. The countertops now sit two inches higher so they're comfortable for Paul to work at (he's six feet three inches tall). To maximize storage even more, Paul stole two feet from the bedroom to expand the closet.

The space between the living room and kitchen became the guest room, with sliding etched-glass doors that provide privacy. While he doesn't often have friends stay overnight, Paul says, "I like to have the flexibility to put up company. Also, as a realtor,



BENJAMIN MOORE  
ELMIRA WHITE

BENJAMIN MOORE  
MIDDLEBURY BROWN



I know the value guest rooms add to a condo." When not accommodating visitors, the space functions as a den.

"My previous home was traditional 1920s style," Paul says, "so I had wanted something that was totally different: urban and

contemporary and yet still elegant." His new condo certainly fits the bill, and its welcoming design will no doubt inspire many fabulous dinner parties to come. But this time around, it will be Paul who will be sending out the invitations. ▷

"I wanted the bedroom to be a quiet, soothing place," says Paul. A comfortable velvet headboard, luxurious 400-thread-count Italian bedding and a soft mohair throw complement the rich chocolate brown accent wall. Etched-glass closet doors give the space a sense of airiness, while wall-mounted speakers provide quality sound for the newly installed central stereo system.

**old versus new**

When buying a condo, one of the biggest decisions is whether to opt for an established building or a new development. Realtor Paul Maranger weighs in on the pros and cons.

#### old condos

**pros** • What you see is what you get, and it's easy to understand the layout. • You can move in when you decide. • Usually costs at least 20 per cent less per square foot than a new building. • Storage lockers are usually larger. **cons** • Fees may be higher, especially in buildings with a smaller number of units. • Common areas may be outdated. • You'll likely have to do some research: Has the building been well managed and upgraded over time?

#### new condos

**pros** • Many now feature nine-foot ceilings. • You can choose all the finishes. • First-time buyers, who can't finance a renovation, can buy current styles and new finishes with a five per cent (or less) down payment. • Great building amenities: a gym, mini movie theatre, guest suites. **cons** • Floor plans make it difficult to visualize the layout. • Developments are rarely finished on time. • Parking is generally more costly. • Sales centres are expertly decorated – most buyers can't afford the same scale and calibre of furniture.

"This kitchen is ideal because I often get home just before – or after! – guests arrive, so cooking becomes part of the entertaining"



**ABOVE** Paul maximized the kitchen's width beyond the usual condo standard, with a bank of floor-to-ceiling cabinets. "The storage helps me keep surfaces tidy and clutter-free," he says. He chose the subway-tile backsplash for its chic glassy, transparent quality – a relief from all the dark wood. **ABOVE RIGHT** A kitchen focal point, the island is ideal for informal entertaining. "Friends can sit here while I put dinner together," Paul says. Integrated drawers hold placemats, napkins and candles. **BELOW RIGHT** The dark satin-finish mahogany bar stands where a wall used to. "I don't like the look of an open bar," says Paul, "so I had the cabinetmaker continue the cabinets here." Glass shelves and halogen pot lights brighten up the enclosed space, which includes cupboards, a bar sink and wine fridge.

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### AN ENTERTAINING SET UP

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**Design:** Re.Do House & Garden, Hamilton, 905-525-9075. **Project manager:** Restorcon Contracting Services, 877-740-7266; Toronto, 416-747-7266; [restorcon.com](http://restorcon.com). **Hardwood flooring:** Paint, Hardwood & Décor, Concord, Ont., 905-669-8300; [painthardwooddecor.com](http://painthardwooddecor.com). **DINING ROOM Paint:** Chinese Blue 90 (accent wall), Farrow & Ball, 877-363-1040 or [farrow-ball.com](http://farrow-ball.com) for retailers and to order. **Table, chairs:** Elte, 888-276-3583; Toronto, 416-785-7885; [elte.com](http://elte.com). **Pendant lamp, candle wall sconces:** South Hill Home, Toronto, 416-972-7224; [southhillhome.com](http://southhillhome.com). **Artwork** (hallway): Thomas Horbett, Hamilton, 905-523-1914. **LIVING ROOM Paint:** Chinese Blue 90 (accent wall), Farrow & Ball (see above). **Drapery:** Re.Do House & Garden (see above). **Sofa:** Art Shoppe, Toronto, 416-487-3211; [theartshoppe.com](http://theartshoppe.com). **Coffee table:** Ethan Allen, Toronto, 416-545-0090; [ethanallen.com](http://ethanallen.com) for more stores. **Chairs:** Terra Nova Linen House, Vancouver, 604-688-9280; [threadcounts.com](http://threadcounts.com). **Area rug:** Anderson Carpet and Home, Burlington, Ont., 905-639-0666; [andersoncarpetandhome.com](http://andersoncarpetandhome.com). **HALL Bench:** Urban Essential, Toronto, 416-646-2702. **Artwork:** Patricia Karen Gagic, Hamilton, 905-921-3203. **TV/GUEST ROOM Paint:** Stormy Monday 2112-50 (walls), Benjamin Moore, 800-361-5898 for retailers; [benjaminmoore.ca](http://benjaminmoore.ca). **Sofa, ottomans:** Re Do House & Garden (see above). **Glass doors:** The Home Depot, 800-628-0525 or [homedepot.ca](http://homedepot.ca) for stores and to order. **Area rug:** Katu Design, Toronto, 416-569-6925; [katudesign.com](http://katudesign.com).

**KITCHEN Paint:** Cement Gray 2112-60 (walls), Benjamin Moore (see above). **Cabinetry, island, bar:** Restorcon Contracting Services (see above). **Stools:** Urban Essential (see above). **Marble flooring, subway tiles:** Square Ft. Tile, Toronto, 416-787-4300. **Pendant lights:** Elte (see above). **Sink, bar sink:** Ginger's, 888-444-3292; Toronto, 416-787-1787; [gingersbath.com](http://gingersbath.com). **BEDROOM Paint:** Elmira White HC-84 (walls), Middlebury

Brown HC-68 (accent wall), Benjamin Moore (see above). **Velvet headboard:** Re.Do House & Garden (see above). **Closet doors:** The Home Depot (see above). **Wall-mounted speakers:** Fairview HiFi, Burlington, Ont., 905-681-1872; [fairviewhifi.com](http://fairviewhifi.com). **Italian bed linens, mohair throw:** Au Lit Fine Linens, 800-363-6080 for stores and to order; Toronto, 416-489-7010; [aulitfinelinens.com](http://aulitfinelinens.com).

### CLASSIC COMFORT

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**Paint:** Opal 4157-11 (all trim), Frosted Pebble 4205-21 (hallway walls; all ceilings except den), Heather Grey 4205-42 (walls in living room, office), Thatch 4157-31 (walls in dining room, guest room, master bedroom, bathroom), Sico, 800-463-7426 or [sico.ca](http://sico.ca) for retailers. **Blinds:** Alleen's, 800-558-5670; Toronto, 416-977-2551; [alleen.com](http://alleen.com). **LIVING ROOM Sofa:** Art Shoppe, Toronto, 416-487-3211; [theartshoppe.com](http://theartshoppe.com). **Ottoman, mirror, armchair:** Barrymore Furniture, Toronto, 416-532-2891; [barrymorefurniture.com](http://barrymorefurniture.com). **Chinese sideboards:** Greentea Design, 888-222-0195; Toronto, 416-462-1459; [greenteadesign.com](http://greenteadesign.com). **Fireplace screen:** The Fireplace Shop, Toronto, 416-483-1443; [thefireplaceshop.com](http://thefireplaceshop.com). **Blue-and-white vase:** Hinchcliff & Lee Distinguished Decor, Port Hope, Ont., 905-885-5905; [hinchcliffandlee.ca](http://hinchcliffandlee.ca). **Drapery, rods:** Restoration Hardware, 800-762-1005 or [restorationhardware.com](http://restorationhardware.com) for stores, catalogue and to order. **HALLWAY Mahogany table:** Barrymore Furniture (see above). **Georgian-style lantern:** Sescolite, Toronto, 416-651-6570; Richmond Hill, Ont., 905-881-2808; Burlington, Ont., 905-632-8659; [sescolite.com](http://sescolite.com). **DINING ROOM White chairs:** UpCountry, Toronto, 416-777-1700; Vaughan, Ont., 905-760-8108; Burlington, Ont., 905-631-1100; [upcountry.com](http://upcountry.com). **Table:** Art Shoppe (see above). **Sideboard:** Stylegarage, 866-534-4343; Toronto, 416-534-4343; [stylegarage.com](http://stylegarage.com). **Buddha sculpture:** Hinchcliff & Lee Distinguished Decor (see above). **Mirror:** Hardware, Toronto, 416-462-3099. **Drapery, rods:** Restoration Hardware (see above). **KITCHEN Paint:** Very Pale Grey 6198-21 (walls), Neutral Grey 6198-42 (base cabinets, shelves, trim), Opal 4157-11 (upper cabinets), Obsidian Glass 4208-73 (hood, island legs), Sico (see above). **Windows:** Marvin Windows and Doors, Mississauga, Ont., 905-670-5052; [marvin.com](http://marvin.com) for retailers. **Window installation:** TreadStone Carpentry and Renovations, Toronto, 416-526-4695. **Cabinetry:** Edwards & Wilson Cabinetmakers, Toronto, 416-462-0703. **Cabinetry hardware:** Restoration Hardware (see above). **Countertops:** Marble Trend, Toronto, 416-783-9911. **Tile, chair rail:** Olympia Tile International, 800-268-1613 for showrooms; Toronto, 416-785-6666; [olympiatile.com](http://olympiatile.com). **Blue-and-white platter, fruit plate:** William Ashley, 800-268-1122; Toronto, 416-964-2900; Mississauga, Ont., 905-566-8500;