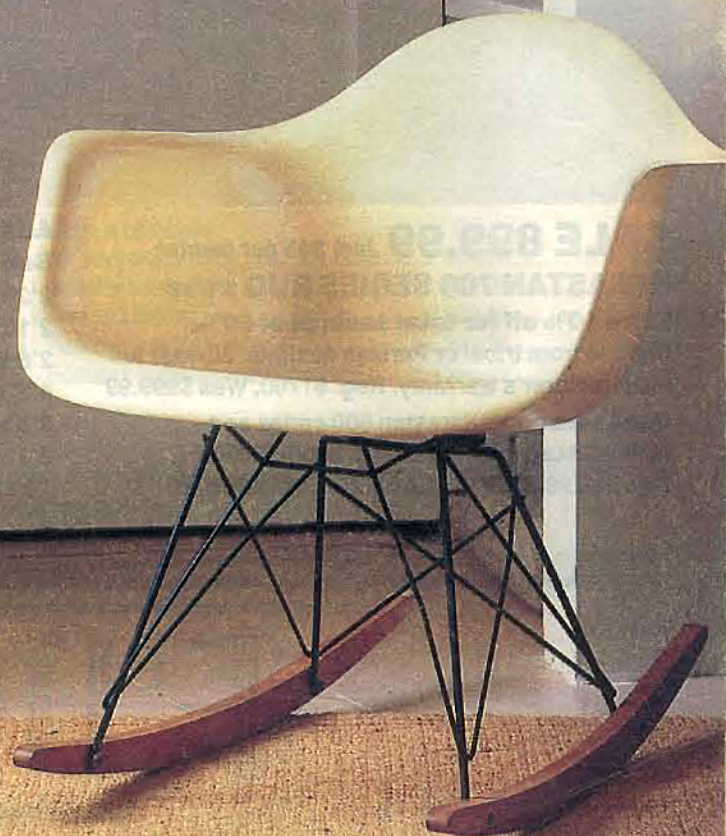


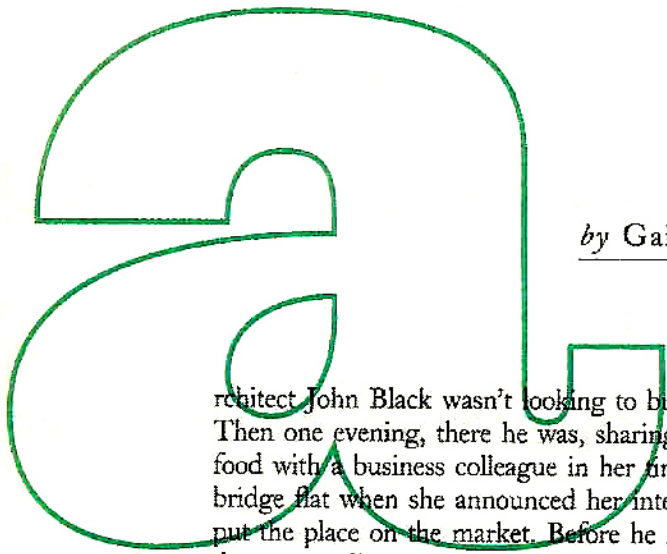
Y O U R
HOME

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Transformations

Classic miniature



by Gail Ravgiala

Architect John Black wasn't looking to buy a condo. Then one evening, there he was, sharing Chinese food with a business colleague in her tiny Cambridge flat when she announced her intentions to put the place on the market. Before he knew it, they were talking price and Black was measuring rooms.

He had the master plan for renovating the space laid out before he even took possession of the property.

The one-bedroom unit had a lot going for it. It was in a well-maintained building on a relatively quiet street just a short walk from Black's office in Central Square. And while it was small, just 560 square feet, it had large windows and good light.

"But," says Black, "there was no place to eat." No matter where you placed a table in the small alcove off the kitchen, it was smack in the middle of the traffic flow.

Black, who opened his firm, Lapis Architecture, in 1988, solved the problem by moving the entrance to the living room from left to right. This required tearing out the bearing wall between the two rooms. Instead of replacing it, he used a steel beam for support and created a half wall and doorway defined by a decorative column that reflects the architecture of the 1920s building. Now, from the entry hall, which Black enhanced with a vaulted

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AN ARCHITECT'S EYE FOR DETAIL MAKES A



ceiling, the view is across the dining area and into the living room, where a handsome bank of windows allows a view of the street below.

The new configuration expands the apartment visually, says Black. Yet, not a single square inch of floor space was added.

Architectural details such as the arched soffits he used throughout the condominium are a Black trademark. "They create a sense of entry into each room," he says, "which in turn gives the view through the apartment a grander feeling."

"I incorporate arches into many of my projects," he adds. "I love their classical look and their romantic feel. They give a richness and elegance to the space."

So, too, do the white cornice moldings he added to accent the dramatic wall colors he chose.

"The scheme was for a softly colored living area into which the support spaces – the kitchen, bathroom and bedroom – open up with strong saturated colors."

He knew right away he wanted to use rich terra-cotta red in the bedroom. The softer green of the living room is the perfect neutral counterpoint. The green becomes deeper and richer in the galley kitchen, which underwent a total transformation.

"The kitchen is a very efficient and pleasant space to work in," says Black, noting that by installing new, smaller appliances – a 24-inch stove, 28-inch refrigerator and 24-inch dishwasher – and using 42-inch-high overhead cabinets, he was able to increase storage space significantly. To keep costs down, Black chose stock cabinets and laminate counter tops.

Here again, Black's signature arch links kitchen and dining area. The column he used in the living/dining divider, with its black diamond capital, is duplicated on each side of the kitchen arch, and the diamond pattern is picked up in red and green tiles on the backsplash.

The bathroom also underwent a total facelift. Once new fixtures were installed, Black used oversized (6-inch by 6-inch) tiles to give the room a spacious feeling. The walls are painted a vibrant yellow that makes the room welcoming and alive.

"The wonderful thing about paint," says Black, "is that there are

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TOP LEFT, OVERSIZED TILES AND BRIGHT COLORS GIVE THE BATH A SPACIOUS FEELING. TOP RIGHT AND BOTTOM LEFT, THE KITCHEN IS FRAMED BY BLACK'S SIGNATURE ARCH AND COLUMNS. BOTTOM RIGHT, MOLDING UNIFIES THE FIREPLACE AND NEW BUILT-IN SHELVES.

photos by John Horner

BIG DIFFERENCE IN A TINY CAMBRIDGE CONDO

CLASSIC MINIATURE

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literally thousands of beautiful colors to choose from and painting is the least expensive way in which a space can be renovated.”

For help with the color scheme and furnishings, Black turned to interior designer Susan Ishikawa of Studio 115 in Cambridge with whom he often collaborates on projects for his own clients.

“As a starting point,” says Black, “we went to the color wheel to pick out complementary colors. That sets a direction.”

Together, Black and Ishikawa carefully selected paints. “It takes time to get the color just right,” says Black. “I start with a patch and watch it for a few days.” Col-

with black slate.

He then redesigned the mantel and carried the molding detail across to the new built-in shelves on each side of the hearth. The result is a refined, unified look.

All told, the project took but four months to complete and cost just \$19,000, a veritable bargain considering that both the kitchen and the bathroom were overhauled and fitted with new appliances, fix-

tures and cabinetry.

“Happily,” says Black, “I was not living in the apartment during the renovation.” And just as happily, he is now taking up residence in his completed creation. ▲