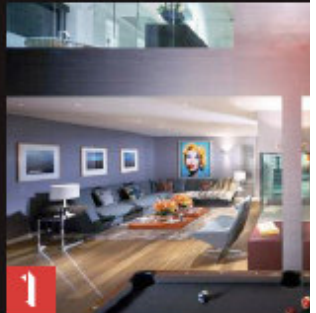


VOGUE MALE



The chrome and steel excesses of the 1980s bachelor pad have given way to a subtler, more sophisticated look

WORDS: AMELIA THORPE



One client recommends another and, before you know it, you've become a specialist 'bachelor pad' interior designer, which is just what's happened to Niloufar Bakhtiar-Clignet. The majority of my clients are city guys, who are under 40 and single,' she explains. 'On the one hand, they want high-tech places with plenty of wow to impress their friends, and on the other, they want a haven where they can go to relax and totally forget the stresses of their jobs,' she says.

Essential requirements include high-tech 'toys for boys', be it a state-of-the-art music system, home cinema, several TV and computer screens and 'anything on remote control', as Bakhtiar-Clignet puts it, plus plenty of other equipment, from a purpose-built home gym to a climate-controlled wine cellar and cigar humidor. While the gadgets seem to be top of the list of requirements, what are the other important considerations?

To add the all-important 'wow', Bakhtiar-Clignet will create an impressive reception area. 'They will usually entertain a lot of people at the same time,' she says, so a large, open-plan

living and dining area, preferably with fireplaces and a bar, is ideal. If there is space, she likes to create a separate media room with very comfortable seating. 'That's where they can schlopf and watch TV,' she adds.

And what about colours? Helen Fewster of Suna Interior Design, who regularly designs show penthouse apartments for developers, targeted at professionals, who often happen to be men wanting a city centre pied-à-terre, has strong views. 'With guys, we tend to avoid really strong colours,' she explains. A more neutral palette of charcoal greys and oatmeal are more likely, although she will use accents of bolder colour to create a confident look. 'And we always, always, avoid the "playboy" look of the 90s - black, red and white - that's an absolute no-go,' she laughs.

Someone else with a client list of often male city professionals is interior designer, Sally Demie. 'Many men like their homes to look very ordered and elegant, with a place for everything and everything in its place,' says Demie. 'They often say that they want it to look like a hotel, albeit one with some personal possessions about - but everything is very considered and streamlined.' Many, she says, tend towards a muted palette of colours, 'but I always try to push a little further, so that it doesn't look soulless,' she says.

The kitchen, however, tends not to get much attention, apart from a large fridge with ice and water dispenser and, preferably, an integrated TV. 'Although I have a few who cook for pleasure, most of them couldn't care less,' says Bakhtiar-Clignet, adding that a caterer is usually on hand to deal with the parties. 'They are more into barbecues, so a terrace with music and heating is much more important.' Interior designer Karin Verzariu of Key Interiors agrees. 'Many are not that interested in the kitchen, but it does need to have all mod cons to reflect the quality of the rest of the apartment,' she says.

And what about the bedroom? Bakhtiar-Clignet puts it succinctly. 'They want a girl tramp,' she laughs. 'A beautiful bed, nice carpeting, and a fridge full of champagne, vodka and caviar.' She finds that many clients also enjoy a luxurious bathroom, complete with super-powerful shower and steam room. A home gym is another requirement, if space permits, complete with integrated AV equipment, even computer screens so that her clients can work while they exercise.

An ordered and well-lit bespoke dressing room is also important, as designer Gilly Holloway explains. 'It needs to be tidy,' she says. 'It's something about successful men - they particularly don't like chaos.'

WORK AND PLAY

Convenience and comfort are two key elements of bachelor pads, as shown by Target Living (1, 10), Chris Piarot (2), NBB Design (3, 6, 9), Key Interiors (8), Suna Interior Design (4, 7) and ClearSphere (5). According to interior designers, men like their homes to look ordered and elegant, with all mod cons and a muted colour palette.

Not every male client is interested...

'Most are not interested in fabrics and colours, and their eyes glaze over at the very mention,' says Gilly Holloway, a designer who runs a property search firm. 'Instead, I try to get a handle on their lifestyle to find an interest that they get excited about.' She might work on ways to display a client's paintings, for example, or choose a colour scheme for a perfectly lit art collection.

Sally Dernie says that limited interest may be less to do with whether her city professional clients are male, and more to do with the fact that they are busy. 'Their attitude tends to be, "I just want to get it done",' she explains. 'So I tend to approach them in a businesslike way. I present them with three clear options and explain that they need to make time to make their choices or I can't do my job properly, and most respond perfectly well to that.'



CRASH PAD Neutral palette with colourful accents and comfortable seating make a successful combination (above), as do impressive, open-plan dining areas with open fireplaces and for entertaining in (right). Both are by NBB Design.

Holloway likes to include a drawer with leather-lined compartments for watches, cuff links and dress pins, plus separate shoe storage, shelves for sweaters and casual clothes, and space to hang rows and rows of colour-graded shirts. 'There can be 60-80 shirts in there,' she says. 'And for one client, I even designed specially-sized drawers to fit the way his maid folded his boxer shorts.'

Helen Fewster points to another aspect of pied-à-terre design: its environmental credentials. In her experience, younger buyers, especially, are now expecting to see eco-friendly interiors that feature sustainable materials, low-energy lighting and convenient recycling arrangements. 'It's all got to be well thought out and made as easy as possible,' she says.

Convenience is all, it seems. Most of Bakhtiar-Chignat's clients prefer to pay more, she says, for a hassle-free service. 'They want to buy the best so that there won't be any trouble, and as soon as something's not okay, it's a big problem,' she says. 'They just don't have the time to deal with it.'



TOYS FOR THE BOYS



High-tech For the latest in high-tech smart home control, intelligent lighting, multi-room AV, home cinema, networks and phone systems, and CCTV and home security, choose an installer with system integration experience. 'Most home technology can be integrated into a central control system, concealed from view in a dedicated systems cupboard, with music, television, lighting and heating, all controlled from the same touch-screens and remotes,' says home technology specialist, Alistair Ingram of ClearSphere. www.clearsphere.co.uk



Steam rooms Home steam solutions are becoming increasingly easy to install,' says Antony Watkins of Helo, manufacturer of bespoke steam showers and wet rooms, spa-style tiled rooms, and steam additions to shower enclosures. Look out for the added extras too, such as fibre-optic 'starry night' lighting, integrated music systems, iroko fold-up seats or sweeping mosaic-tiled or ceramic benches, infra-red seat heating, and automatic essential oil fragrancing systems. The compact steam generating equipment can be sited in an adjacent cupboard or loft. www.helo.co.uk



Wine storage 'Wine stored properly tastes better,' says Daniel Primack of Around Wine, UK distributor of EuroCave. 'All wine that is to be kept for weeks, months or years will mature properly when stored in a cellar environment.' Primack suggests 12-13°C as the perfect temperature for storing wine. Other options include traditionally built cellar wine racks. 'Keep wine cool in a dark and humid environment, away from UV light, and avoid fluctuations in temperature,' says Adam Russell of wine importer, Domaine Direct. www.aroundwine.co.uk www.domainedirect.co.uk

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