

# CS Interiors



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# Trumped!

A pied-à-terre in Trump Tower packs a Hermès orange punch with creative carte blanche on a cost-cutting budget. **By Lisa Skolnik | Photography by Eric Hausman**



“Carte blanche” and “budget-conscious” are rarely the usual terms of engagement from client to designer. “They’re not contradictory, but they do make strange bedfellows,” observes Chicago interior designer Anthony Michael, who just completed a 2,000-square-foot, two-bedroom pied-à-terre in Trump Tower under those directives for a West Suburban couple with three children.

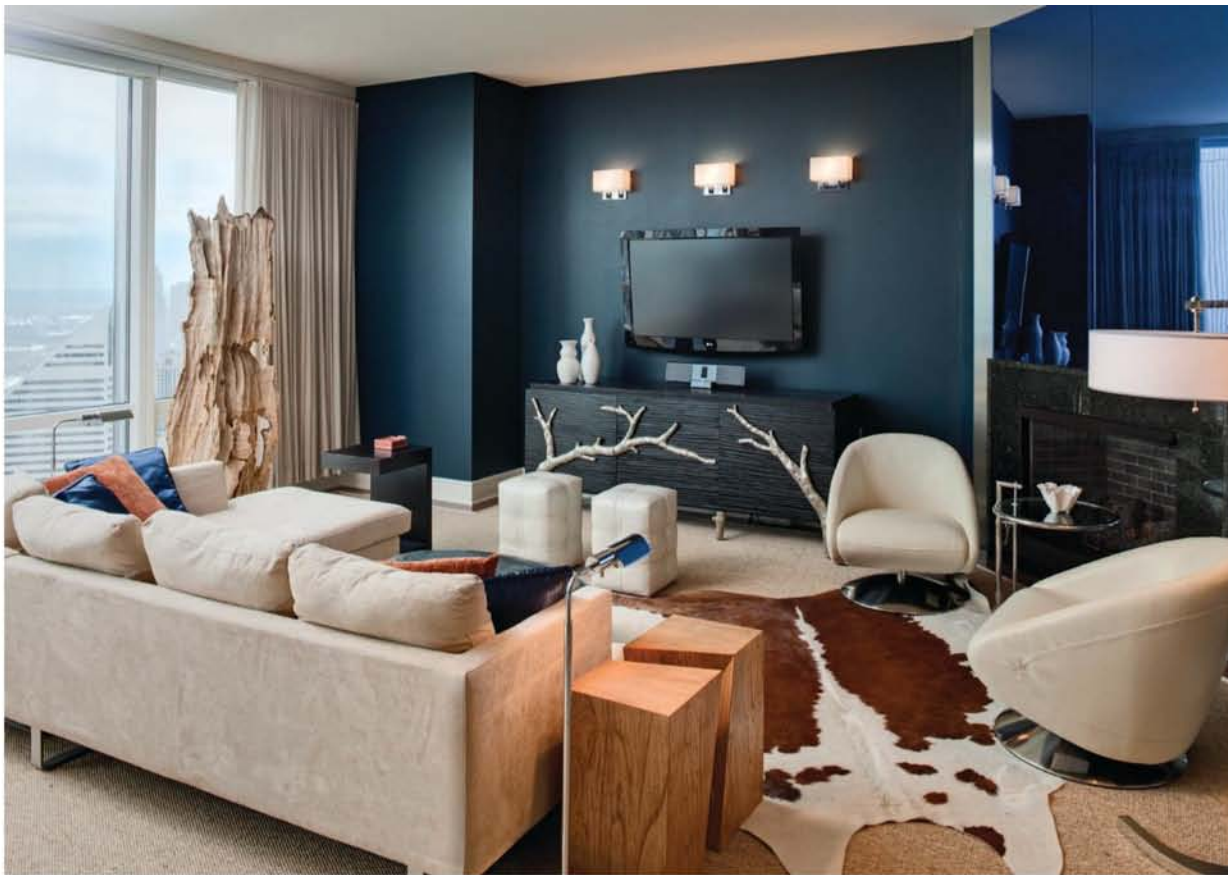
Real estate woes inspired the incongruous orders. “We bought the condo in 2004 at pre-construction prices and never planned on keeping it. Then the market tanked and we were stuck with it,” groans the client. “After letting it sit empty for six months, we finally figured we’d better try to enjoy it. But I didn’t want to put a lot more money into it.”

He bought high-quality, price-is-right pieces and snagged sexy attention-grabbers on the cheap.

With fast, cheap and chic as the game plan and an already packed agenda, she scooped up two hours of Michael’s services at a charity auction. At their meeting, when she heard what it would take to get the place in shape, reality hit and she hired him to get it done.

Michael, known for his plush, high-end projects, points out that “I’ve been creatively economical on all of my own places. So my first thought was ‘Wow. This can be fun.’ She told me to make it modern, urban **CONTINUED...**

**VIEW FINDER** Designer Anthony Michael in the 2,000-square-foot space he outfitted in Trump Tower.



...CONTINUED and edgy, but not too edgy," he chuckles. His client's only stipulations were to use blue and avoid pedestrian symmetry.

Then reality hit for him as well. "It was late March, and she wanted it done by Memorial Day so they could use it with their kids over the

summer. That gave me 60 days. And the budget was a vise-tight \$100,000 for a soup-to-nuts job that had to include labor, fees and services. But the kicker is that Trump's a union building, which just about triples a lot of those costs," he points out.

Factor in Champagne taste for both designer and client, and it could have been a fiasco on every level.

"I was a little nervous," admits Michael. "When there are strict limits, high expectations and tight deadlines, there's a lot at risk... not to mention the potential to lose your client if you don't deliver."

He needn't have worried. Though the resourceful designer insists "I merely put the money where it counts," in truth he delivered the job on time, on budget and above the couple's expectations by using a host of clever tactics.

He bought high-quality, price-is-right pieces (like a BoConcept sofa and a glam media cabinet with nickel-plated branches from Global Views), and snagged sexy attention-grabbers on the cheap (the most dazzling case in point is a \$1,000 stainless steel chandelier from a Mart sample sale).

And he masked virtually every inch of the brassy Brazilian pre-finished laminate floor with a soothing custom CONTINUED...

#### BRANCHING OUT

Above: "Our upholstery fabrics were neutral, so I could use bolder hues," says Michael, who swears by Benjamin Moore's Aura for its depth and durability. Sectional from BoConcept; '70s swivel chairs from Salvage One. Right: The foyer gets a punch of orange. The cowhide mirror was a flea market find.





**ETHEREAL-CHIC** Clockwise from left: The stunning dining room with a high-contrast carnation wall installation; the amazing city views through floor-to-ceiling windows; an elegant pale blue bedroom that Michael designed



...CONTINUED sisal carpet, then added cost-effective built-ins to layer the space with architectural substance, utility and razzle-dazzle. The most noticeable are slim stainless steel columns that encase the fireplace and a trim steel serving console with a jaunty asymmetrical swoop in the dining area.

Other picks were more brazen. For paint colors, "I chose a complex blue with a steely gray undertone for edge, but then heightened

"I loaded up and installed them en masse in a soft, rolling, asymmetrical wave," says Michael of the wall carnations.

the drama with Hermès orange in the foyer," notes Michael. "I'm glad I didn't know what he was doing because I would have never gone for the orange, but it's fabulous," says the client.

She also wouldn't have approved of marrying a frothy \$400 vintage Louis XVI carved wood console Michael lacquered cream with a kitschy cowhide mirror, but somehow the two flea market finds "are perfect mates and fabulous in the foyer," she admits.

And then there's the *pièce de résistance*—born from need but downright ingenious.

"On this kind of budget, I had to forget about fine art," he admits. "But we needed something artistic and ethereal to balance all the 'edge,' and use up that whole, huge wall. A painting that size would have been way too expensive."

Ceramic carnations Michael unearthed at yet another Mart sample sale did the trick.

"I loaded up on them and installed them en masse in a soft, rolling, asymmetrical wave on the steel blue wall," he explains. The gleaming cream flowers pop against the inky blue wall, adding a huge dose of visual snap and crackle that grabs center stage.

"Our mouths dropped when we walked in here. We love everything, but I'm especially impressed with those flowers," says the client, who was banned from any drop-ins during the job. But she's expecting to have a lot of face time with Michael on their next project, a home in Florida. "I'll have a bigger budget, and now that I know what Anthony can do, I have even bigger plans," she laughs. ■