

**Power, Sex, and Furniture: Masculinity and
the Bachelor Pad in 1950s-60s America**

Jessica Ellen Sewell

The Occasional Papers of the School of Social Science are versions of talks given at the School's weekly Thursday Seminar. At these seminars, Members present work-in-progress and then take questions. There is often lively conversation and debate, some of which will be included with the papers. We have chosen papers we thought would be of interest to a broad audience. Our aim is to capture some part of the cross-disciplinary conversations that are the mark of the School's programs. While Members are drawn from specific disciplines of the social sciences—anthropology, economics, sociology and political science—as well as history, philosophy, literature and law, the School encourages new approaches that arise from exposure to different forms of interpretation. The papers in this series differ widely in their topics, methods, and disciplines. Yet they concur in a broadly humanistic attempt to understand how, and under what conditions, the concepts that order experience in different cultures and societies are produced, and how they change.

Jessica Ellen Sewell is a Member of the School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study for 2011-12 and author of *Women and the Everyday City: Public Space in San Francisco, 1890-1915* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011). In summer 2012 she will be taking up a position as Associate Professor of Architecture at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University in Suzhou, China. Previously, she has been an Assistant Professor of the History of Art and Architecture and American and New England Studies at Boston University, a Faculty Fellow at NYU, and a Visiting Assistant Professor at Binghamton University. She received her BA in Visual and Environmental Studies from Harvard and Radcliffe Colleges and her PhD in Architecture from the University of California, Berkeley. She has received fellowships from the Bancroft Library, the Huntington Library, and Boston University's Humanities Foundation. She is currently working on a book on objects, interiors, and masculinity in the postwar United States.

Power, Sex, and Furniture: Masculinity and the Bachelor Pad in 1950s-60s America

The mid-1950s saw the invention of a new, highly mythologized housing type, the bachelor pad, although the term “bachelor pad” did not come into common usage until the early 1960s.¹ The most prominent articulation of the bachelor pad and the swinging bachelor it contained was created in *Playboy* magazine (figure 1). Between 1956 and 1978, *Playboy* published four designs for houses and apartments, six designs for elements of the ideal apartment, and twenty articles showing real-life bachelor pads, including Hugh Hefner’s own Chicago mansion. *Playboy* was joined by other magazines, as well as by the movie industry, which in films such as *Pillow Talk* (1959), *The Tender Trap* (1955), *Come Blow Your Horn* (1963), and *There’s a Girl in My Soup* (1970) featured the character of the playboy and his lair, the bachelor pad.

In this paper I will show how the bachelor pad was the site of a compelling fantasy of individual consumption and economic and sexual power, one that had a great deal of salience in the context of what many contemporary writers argued was a “crisis of masculinity” in the late 1950s. It was also, I will argue, a site that troubled the presumed heterosexuality of those that fantasized about it, as the bachelor and his pad constantly and inevitably danced with the specter of queerness, through the bachelor’s taste, his interest in consumption, and, most centrally, his rejection of marriage in favor of narcissistic pleasure.

The bachelor pad as a type is an apartment (more rarely, a weekend house) for a single professional man, organized for entertaining and pleasure, and displaying tasteful consumption. From the first issue, Hugh Hefner, *Playboy*’s founder and editor, proclaimed that *Playboy* was centered on private interior space:

We don’t mind telling you in advance—we plan spending most of our time inside. We like our apartment. We enjoy mixing up cocktails and an hors d’oeuvre or two, putting a little mood music on the phonograph and inviting a female acquaintance for a quiet discussion on Picasso, Nietzsche, jazz, sex.²

As the bachelor pad is typically an apartment, not a building, it is largely a work of domestic interior design or interior architecture. It serves primarily as a space for entertaining, both individual dates and larger groups (at parties similar to, but on a smaller scale than, Hugh Hefner’s regular bashes chronicled in the pages of the magazine and shown, in cleaned-up form, on the television show “*Playboy*’s Penthouse”). While this entertainment is presented purely in the context of leisure and pleasure, it also functions potentially as a tool of upward mobility, a chance, as we have seen in numerous sitcoms,

to entertain the boss, show that you are the right sort of person (consuming the right sort of things) and thus move up the corporate ladder.

In addition, the bachelor pad, as described in *Playboy*, “is, or should be, the outward reflection of his (the bachelor’s) inner self—a comfortable, livable and yet exciting expression of the person he is and the life he leads.”³ The idea of expressing individual identity takes on a particular weight in the context of what sociologists and cultural commentators in the late 1950s argued was a crisis in masculinity. At the core of this crisis was the man whose sense of himself as an individual had been stripped away, a state that was blamed partly on the conformity of corporate America and partly on women. According to the sociologist Talcott Parsons, men’s individuality was crushed through their experience at work, where there was “no place for individuality” and “teamwork and personnel relations reigned over all.”⁴

Life was no better for the man at home. Women were understood as controlling men’s sexuality, through control over sexual limits before marriage, and control of conception and demands for orgasm after.⁵ In addition, theorists of a masculinity crisis argued, the wife also controlled her husband’s working life, through her desire to consume to keep up with the neighbors and the concomitant pressure on her husband to make money and to gain professional status.

Women’s control over men was also understood as spatial—women had taken over bars, clubs, and workplaces, and “wanted to invade everything masculine, emasculate it, cover it with dimity, occupy it forever.”⁶ In the home in particular, men had been squeezed out, as Philip Wylie argued in *Playboy*:

Where once a man had a den, maybe a library, a cellar poolroom, his own dressing room—and good, substantial floors and walls to protect his privacy—he now found himself in a pastel creation with “rooms” often “created” by screens his wife moved about as often as she changed her flower arrangements.⁷

The house had become “a boudoir-kitchen-nursery, dreamed up by women, for women, and as if males did not exist as males,” and even though “for a while, the male fled to the basement and busied himself sawing, painting and sandpapering. . . the women followed him, and today they are hammering right along with him. No place to hide here.”⁸ The bachelor pad can be understood in part as a response to this feeling that men no longer had any space within the house itself, and a shrinking male preserve outside the home as well.

The bachelor pad served as a way to think of an alternative masculinity, apart from work and family (even if few men actually owned one). In a 1958 essay on “The Crisis of American Masculinity,” Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., argued that for men to become men again, they needed to “recover a sense of individual spontaneity. And to do this, a man must visualize himself as an individual apart from the group, whatever it is, which

defines his values and commands his loyalty.”⁹ Visualizing themselves as bachelors, living a life of leisure, may have provided just such an opportunity for already-married men to recover their individuality.

The bachelor pad, I argue, although potentially a model for actual single men, functioned primarily as a kind of dream masculine space for middle-class American men from the mid-1950s to the 1960s, one that continues to have appeal into the present.¹⁰ It is a site to imagine what a male house might be like, in the context of the ideal of the feminized house. There were not a great many bachelors at the time that these bachelor pads were articulated. In 1956, the year of the first *Playboy* bachelor pad design, *Playboy*'s Penthouse Apartment, the median age at first marriage in the United States was at an all-time low of 22.5 for men and 20.1 for women, so the length of most men's bachelor lives was very short.¹¹ Many men went from their parents' house to a college dorm or fraternity and straight into a home shared with a new wife, spending most of their lives in spaces shared with, and presumably decorated by, women. In addition, in 1958 only 46.8% of the readers of *Playboy* were actually bachelors, and of these nearly half (22.7% of total readership) were current college undergraduates, living at home, in a fraternity house, or in a dorm, rather than in an apartment.¹²

Examining the architecture of *Playboy*'s bachelor pads reinforces the argument that they serve as a dream double of the suburban home. The classic *Playboy* bachelor pads are penthouses, so rather than being constrained by occupying just one portion of the floor space of an apartment building, they sit on top of the building, much like a suburban ranch house placed atop a tower. Space in them is typically open and flowing, following a central tenet of architectural modernism dating back to the 1920s. The description of 1956's *Playboy*'s Penthouse Apartment (figure 2) emphasizes the open plan, arguing that “it doesn't follow the conventional plan of separated rooms for various purposes. Instead, there are two basic areas, an active zone for fun and partying and a quiet zone for relaxation, sleep, and such.”¹³ In fact, this plan fits well with the conventions of architecture in the 1950s (as any resident of the Institute for Advanced Study's housing, built in 1957 and designed by Marcel Breuer, knows from personal experience). For example, every winning entry in the Indianapolis Home Show Architectural Competition for 1956 features flowing space between kitchen, dining, and living areas, and often a distinction between this active zone and the private zone of bedrooms and bath (figure 3).

The open plan of bachelor pads extends to the relationship to the outdoors, so that patios become an integral part of the living space. In 1959's Weekend Hideaway, sliding glass panels in the living room allow twenty feet of wall facing the pool to be slid away. The flooring in the living room and the paving around the pool are continuous, so that “indoors and outdoors become one.”¹⁴ The bedrooms each also have their own private patio. Similarly, in 1970's Duplex Penthouse, separate patio terraces open onto nearly every room (figure 4), and in 1963's Patio-Terrace, one extremely elaborate patio contains nearly every function a bachelor pad needs. While the *Playboy* pads are

primarily urban designs, and thus have only terraces and not yards, the continuity of indoor and outdoor space in these designs follows a prominent modern Californian trend highlighted in *Architectural Record's* 1957 review of house designs.¹⁵ The spaces of bachelor pads and of suburban homes are not identical—suburban homes have differentiated spaces for children and adults, while bachelor pads typically have only one bedroom, or have nonhierarchical bedrooms for guests—but they are not as different as the text in *Playboy* would suggest.

* * *

The bachelor was, however, a problematic model for a new, more autonomous masculine identity. While writers like Wylie argued that men were emasculated by the nature of their lives with women, a life without marriage meant never achieving full adult masculinity. In the dominant model of heterosexual masculinity in the late 1950s, married monogamy was essential. As Jonathan Forbes, the multiply married (but single and childless) character played by Tony Randall in *Pillow Talk*, puts it, “That’s what it means to be adult—a wife, a family, a house—a mature man wants those responsibilities.” Masculinity in the 1950s was based upon the breadwinner ideal, such that Talcott Parsons wrote in 1958 that “virtually the only way to be a real man in our society is to have an adequate job and earn a living.”¹⁶ However, a man was not complete until he was not only a breadwinner, but a reproductive breadwinner, and as Barbara Ehrenreich details in *The Hearts of Men*, to resist marriage was to be less than adult, as well as potentially less than a man.¹⁷ This idea is central to the plots of bachelor movies, in which the bachelor at the end gives up his immature sexuality in favor of married life, having found the love of one good woman more compelling than the pleasures of many.

The bachelor and his pad, then, I argue, are compelling fantasies that served as a dream double of the suburban house, but in the process, they constantly troubled normative masculinity. Through his rejection of marriage in favor of pleasure, as well as his interest in consumption and interior design, the figure of the bachelor constantly ran up against implication of homosexuality. One could also argue that in this period when most men married so young, choosing bachelorhood might serve as a strong indicator of gay sexuality.

* * *

The bachelor pad served as a site for imagining masculine consumption. With the collapse of both work and home as bases for masculine identity, and in the context of an enormous expansion of consumer goods, consumption became a realm through which men could express their personality. *Playboy* magazine as a whole served as a guide to new masculine consumption, teaching its readers what music to listen to, clothes to wear, alcohol to drink, and furniture to buy in order to participate in a hip version of professional-class taste culture.

The *Playboy* bachelor pads express sophisticated consumption through their decorations, furnishings, and gadgets (figure 5). Stylistically, they express the high style modernism championed by *Architectural Record* and modern architects, teaching readers to be sophisticated and up-to-date consumers of architecture and design, just as other articles in *Playboy* teach them to be educated consumers of liquor, clothes, and jazz. For example, each *Playboy* pad includes several pieces designed by prominent modernist designers, including Eero Saarinen (a repeated favorite), Charles and Ray Eames, and Isamu Noguchi. These chairs and other furnishings take center stage in the designs, often dominating the rooms, and are referred to repeatedly in the text. They are also pulled out and shown separately, and information about the designer, manufacturer (often Knoll), and price is included in captions. For readers, the *Playboy* bachelor pad designs can function as both aspirational fantasies and catalogues, allowing readers to immediately go out and buy sophisticated elements of the ideal bachelor pad to decorate their own homes. These designs also, of course, gave young bachelors cultural capital, allowing them to recognize high-style objects (at their boss' house for instance), even when they could not afford them themselves.

The bachelor pad's interior needed to be stylish, because style is essential to the persona of the playboy bachelor and his upwardly mobile aspirations. However, any interest in interior design was very clearly gendered, then as now, and was associated both with women and with gay men. The bachelor's sexuality was further threatened by the nature of the bachelor pad itself, which served as a space for consumption, a female-gendered activity, and by the bachelor's disinterest in marriage. Thus the design needed to be clearly masculine, to mark it as different both from the feminized space of the family home and from the queer markers of "swish" homosexuality. But traditional modes of masculine design, modeled on the men's club and the hunting lodge, were too completely homosocial, and inappropriate for a straight man, who should want to entertain and seduce women in his home. Those spaces served as antidotes to a feminized family life, to be enjoyed in small doses.

Without those models to resort to, the design cues of heterosexual masculinity were subtle. While the dead animals and club chairs of those older homosocial spaces have no place here, their traces remain in the evocation of hunting through art such as the Lascaux motifs in the 1956 Penthouse Apartment's bathroom (figure 6) as well as in the use of leather, dark colors, and rich textures. Textures are also used to express the ruggedness and roughness of masculinity, and set it apart from the femininity that had been historically linked with smoothness.¹⁸ In the Penthouse Apartment, a "sense of masculine richness and excitement stems in part from . . . a juxtaposition of textures—the smooth wall, the stone, the planter, the cork floor—and for visual impact the unadorned brick wall."¹⁹ Similarly, in the *Playboy* Town House (figure 7), texture is all: one entire wall is of rugged fieldstone, with a "three-story-high wall of teak" facing.²⁰

We can see these masculine signs playing out in *Pillow Talk*, which juxtaposes the bachelor pad of Brad Allen (Rock Hudson) and the feminine apartment of Jan Morrow

(Doris Day), often in split screen, heightening the contrast (figure 8). The walls of Jan's apartment are smoothly painted in light colors, and the color scheme of her apartment overall is pastel colors, accented with pink and with images of flowers and gardens. In contrast, Brad's apartment is relatively dark, with modern oil paintings and landscapes in dark wood frames, and the furnishings include a great deal of dark woods and leathers, as well as showing up-to-date, modern, clean lines. One wall is of bare brick, and most of the others are covered in textured wallpaper evocative of wood or bark.

Straight masculinity is also performed through absences; in the Penthouse Apartment, "lamps, which would impede the clean, open look of the place, are virtually dispensed with; there is a complete absence of bric-a-brac, patterned fabrics, pleats and ruffles"²¹ (figure 9). While the windows in the bachelor pads sometimes have curtains, they are all of a solid, unpatterned color and typically made of modern materials like fiberglass. Unlike the windows in Jan's apartment in *Pillow Talk*, they have no valences or ties, but hang straight and do their best to be purely functional. Toile, afghans, and throw pillows are similarly banned from the bachelor pad, no matter how uncompromising and uncomfortable the modernist sofa.

Two other markers of masculinity are fully embraced in the urbane bachelor pad: liquor and technology. Each pad has not just one, but several bars, which "permits the canny bachelor to remain in the room while mixing a cool one for his intended quarry. No chance of . . . leaving her cozily curled up on the couch with her shoes off and returning to find her mind changed, purse in hand, and the young lady ready to go home, damn it."²² To avoid this eventuality, even the headboard of the bed includes a built-in bar. In the films *The Tender Trap*, *Come Blow Your Horn*, and *There's a Girl in My Soup*, the bar is immediately inside the front door of the bachelor pad, and mixing a drink is always the first thing the bachelor does on entering. Liquor serves as a marker of masculinity, but more importantly, the bar is the center of entertainment, by means of which guests are both served drinks and entertained by the bachelor's skill as a bartender.

In the 1964 Electronic Entertainment Wall (figure 10), a bar, complete with a "unique automatic drink dispenser" with ten spigots, is built in, flanked by speakers, 25-inch color television screens and rear-projection screens for film and slides.²³ The Electronic Entertainment Wall combines the bar and its masculine associations with high technology gadgets. Technology serves several functions in heightening the masculinity of the bachelor pad. It brings with it the masculine associations of science and technology, it is a tool for displaying refined connoisseurship of both gadgets and music (especially jazz), and it functions as the means to total mastery of the environment.

All of the bachelor pads are replete with the most high-tech gadgets available. Kitchens (figure 11) feature radar and microwave ovens, ultrasonic dishwashers, induction ranges, and elaborate systems, such as a storage wall with compartments on a series of vertical conveyer belts, making "culinary necessities revolve into view at the touch of a button."²⁴ The Kitchenless Kitchen gets rid of built-ins altogether, replacing them with gadgets, "automatic electric cooking utensils" including a toaster that starts

itself based on the weight of the bread and a “world-of-the-future English import,” the infrared Magicook broiler.²⁵

In the kitchen, high technology helps bachelors perform for their guests and also minimizes the feminized tasks of cleaning. The Kitchenless Kitchen is itself the center of a performance in which a “handsome hunk of furniture” that “looks like a walnut storage chest or hi-fi cabinet” is unveiled as a kitchen, a transformation that is the center of one of the largest photographs of Fred Lyman’s “Airy Aerie,” which served as a model for the Kitchenless Kitchen. In the Penthouse Apartment, the kitchen counter functions as a stage:

And now for the damndest island counter you’ve ever seen. At one end is a radiant broiler-roaster. Here, under the transparent dome, you can broil a four-inch sirloin or roast a pheasant—or a standing rib roast—to a turn. . . . Lifting the hinged dome automatically brings the base of the unit to counter height. It’s our bet that the manipulation of this broiler, and the sight through the dome of a sizzling steak, will prove for your guests a rival attraction to the best on TV. And you’ll be the director of this show.²⁶

As a director of technology which does the cooking for him, rather than a cook getting his hands dirty, the bachelor remains always in control, even as he entertains his guests.

This combination of total control and performance for guests is epitomized by stereo and entertainment systems (figure 12; see also figure 10). They are the most conspicuous technology in the bachelor pads, and are ubiquitous in *Playboy*, in which they are written about at great length and copiously advertised. The living room in each pad typically features a “room-dominating entertainment wall” with an astonishing range of entertainment technology, described in full in a five-page article in 1964 and revisited in another feature-length article in 1971.²⁷ In addition, on the first episode of Hugh Hefner’s “*Playboy’s Penthouse*” television show, in 1959, Hef spends several minutes showing off the gee-whiz technology of an entertainment system modeled on the one installed in his Chicago mansion. The system as described in 1964 included turntables; tape and video recorders; AM-FM, short wave, and ship-to-shore radio; a movie/TV projector and screen, as well as two rear-projections screens with projectors; a slide projector; multiple TV screens, including one closed circuit TV to “focus in on all parts of the pad”; an elaborate speaker system, oscilloscopes, amps, and preamps; a clock and timers for automatic recording or to turn on any of the pieces of electronic equipment at a set time; LP storage with a push-button selection device; and a telephone system complete with automatic dialing.²⁸

Not only is the entertainment wall a means of entertaining a crowd spectacularly and a way to impress girls, but it also serves to keep the bachelor focused on his life of leisure:

In this electronic age it is both meet and proper that the knowledgeable bachelor should have for his avocational center of attractions an area replete with all the latest electronic inducements to keep him—and whoever he chooses to share his company—indoors.²⁹

It also, of course, is a center of consumption, and a means of displaying tasteful consumption, particularly through choice of music. Not only does the Entertainment Wall include space for a large collection of records (500 in the version included in the Duplex Penthouse), but it also includes a special padded file for delicate (presumably rare and expensive) records.³⁰

In the Entertainment Wall, there are many ways to control its various elements and entertain guests “with your electronic showmanship.”³¹ Several of the gadgets are controlled by remote control, but both the 1960s and 1970s versions also include an elaborate master control unit, further duplicated in an auxiliary unit easily reachable from the couch. Control units abound in the bachelor pads. These allow the bachelor to control nearly every aspect of the environment of the bachelor pad, assisting him with his mission of seduction. The controls in the cabinet next to the bar in the “*Playboy Penthouse*,” for example, can switch the phone to an answering machine “so that the jangling bell or, what’s worse, a chatty call from the date of the night before, won’t shatter the spell being woven,”³² as well as a “self-timing rheostat which will gradually and subtly dim the lights to fit the mood—as opposed to the harsh click of a light switch that plunges all into sudden darkness and may send the fair game fleeing.”³³

The controls in the *Playboy* bachelor pads are quite elaborate and available in nearly every room. Perhaps their most important location is on the headboard of the bed, where they control the music and lights in every room, the locks, and the curtains. When you awake in the morning you can reach

lazily into the control panel, you press the buttons for the kitchen circuits and immediately the raw bacon, eggs, bread and ground coffee you did the right things with the night before . . . start their metamorphosis into crisp bacon, eggs fried just right, and steaming-hot fresh java. Now you flip the switch that draws the curtains and opens the terrace doors to let in the brisk morning air.³⁴

This is a fantasy of pure leisure, in which electricity really is the bachelor’s servant and, if he wishes, he can spend his entire life indolently in bed taking care of every need by remote control. This is also a fantasy of total control, in which the bachelor is able to control everything around him by the push of a button, even, perhaps, his playmate, for whom the pad functions as an electronic spider’s web.³⁵

These control panels are lampooned as crude tools of seduction in the film *Pillow Talk*, in which the bachelor Brad Allen has two switches on the back of his couch, one of which dims the lights, puts on mood music, and locks the doors, and the second of which folds out the sofa bed. An article in the men's magazine *Adam* praises the similar function of the Murphy bed, which "cuts off her escape route. There's something of a great big bed suddenly springing into the middle of the room where there was no bed before that addles the canniest of women. She can only sit there, dimwitted and stunned, contemplating her own surrender."³⁶

Control panels serve not only as a means of performing mastery, but also of orchestrating the tools of seduction, including mood music, lights, and door locks. Similarly, the ubiquitous bars help him keep his female guests inebriated. In a sense, the entire apartment serves as a machine of seduction, which the bachelor controls in order to attract, inebriate, and eventually trap his female prey. This motif of seduction serves to heterosexualize the bachelor pad and its pleasures, helping to diffuse the queer implications of the bachelor's interest in design and disinterest in marriage, just as the use of high tech gadgets further underlines the masculinity of the bachelor. In addition, as Bill Osgerby has argued, the "porn" in *Playboy*, its centerfolds, helped to "stake out the magazine as an unmistakably heterosexual text," attempting to neutralize the potential implications of its focus on consumption, pleasure, and the interior.³⁷ While Osgerby sees this neutralization as successful, I would argue instead that it is always troubled, not only because of the queerness embedded in the focus on the interior and narcissistic consumption, but also because of the non-normativity of the playboy's own sexuality, which focused on individual, often narcissistic, pleasure rather than a reproductive relationship. In using the concept of queerness, I am not simply pointing towards the homosexual potential of the playboy, a potential that becomes harder to ignore in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when *Playboy* featured the pads of several out gay men in its series of "Playboy pads."³⁸ Rather, I see the playboy's own sexuality, with its focus on pleasure and the self, as queer insofar as it works against a dominant model of a normative sexuality focused on reproduction and a single love object.

* * *

In the *Playboy* designs, the problematic sexuality of the bachelor is expressed most clearly in two rooms, the bathroom and the bedroom. Both of these rooms focus on the body and its often solitary pleasures. The bathrooms are amazingly large, separated into two or even three spaces, and outfitted for spending time in (see figure 6); the 1962 townhouse bathroom is described as being of Olympian proportions, with a six-foot-square tub billed as a miniature swimming pool. In the case of the real-life bachelor's weekend house profiled in 1959, the bathroom is the primary space of pleasure, and combines a solarium with a bathtub large enough to fit five naked women (figure 13). These large bathrooms were focused on the pleasures of the body and the narcissism,

even dandyism, associated with focusing on the care of the self. This made these bathrooms troubling to the sexuality of the playboy who inhabited them.

Narcissism, of course, suggests a form of sexual desire focused on not only the wrong object—the self rather than the other—but also on an object of the wrong sex—male rather than female. In the Penthouse Apartment, the masturbatory possibilities of the bathroom as a palace of self-love are further suggested in the description of the toilet enclosure, peculiarly hidden in the plan (figure 14), which shows neither the toilet itself, nor the door:

In addition to the john, it has a bidet, magazine rack, ash tray, and telephone (let's face it, there are bachelors, and well as some of their guests, who like to spend quite a lot of time in the throne room—maybe a hangover from younger days of living at home, when it was the only place to get away from it all—hence we've made this posh head into a comfort station in every sense of the phrase).³⁹

The toilet as the place of privacy—the only fully private space available to many young men living at home—is closeted in this description, an aside within a parenthetical comment, much as the toilet enclosure functions as a closet within the already private space of the bathroom. The bed can also be understood as a deeply private space, in spite of the fact that it is also intended to be shared with the playboy's conquests. Stephen Cohan has noted that in *Pillow Talk*, Brad's bedroom and bed are for him alone, while he seduces women on his downstairs couch with fold-out bed.⁴⁰ Similarly, in the *Playboy* coloring book, the couch is shown as the space for sex, while the round bed is shown only with a Japanese valet.⁴¹ The *Playboy* bed (figure 15), elaborated in two dedicated articles as well as in the pad designs, acts as a bachelor pad in miniature.⁴² The 1959 model includes adjustable backrests and reading lamps for sitting up in bed, a bar and refrigerator, a full array of entertainment technology, a control panel, and other conveniences. It contains the pleasures of entertainment, food, and alcohol, provides a stage for performing mastery over food, drinks, music, lights, and all other aspects of the apartment atmosphere, and potentially provides a place of private work (as well as private pleasure), where you can be your own boss, as Hugh Hefner did when he edited the magazine from his famous round bed, which included file cabinets in the headboard.⁴³ While it might function as a space for heterosexual sex, its ultimate focus is the pleasure of the bachelor, and it is notable that the pictorial of Hef's own bed shows breakfast for one (figure 16), just as the coloring book version of the bed shows only one pillow.

Even the resolutely masculine technology of the hi-fi setup also serves to underline the narcissism and pleasure-seeking, and thus lack of mature heterosexual masculinity, of the playboy bachelor. For example, the detailed specifications of the hi-fi component of the entertainment wall suggest that its primary audience is not nubile women, but rather resolutely male and homosocial hi-fi enthusiasts. The description

accompanying the 1956 Penthouse reinforces this idea, distinguishing between the use of the stereo to entertain guests, using the automatic features, and a more masculine type of listening engaged in by hi-fi enthusiasts. Keir Keightley argues that hi-fi enthusiasts used the immersive experience, loud volume, and technological look of their hi-fi equipment to carve out a space to be alone within the feminized space of the family home.

The bachelor pad, then, as it was presented by the editors of *Playboy* and its other creators, is centered on individual pleasure and consumption. While it is framed by its promoters as quite deliberately aimed at the sexual conquest of women, its meanings and potential uses are more complex. In part, it enables a kind of fantasmatic escape, serving as an architectural dream double of the suburban house, a site for men to imagine what a masculine interior that expressed their own personality might be, and a way to learn how to use consumption to construct a new model of manhood for themselves. Even in the present, when many more men live alone and women's control over the design of interiors is no longer assumed, we can see the continuing strength of this dream both in films, websites, and books that revisit the midcentury bachelor pad, and in the current popularity of the idea of the "man cave." As a stylish space of consumption, however, focused on the body and its pleasures, and arranged for the masculine performance of a narcissistic bachelor, it is also a sort of queer space. Its queerness consists not necessarily in its homosexual potential, which is quite real, but rather in its challenge to dominant narratives of reproductive breadwinner masculinity. The bachelor pad, then, simultaneously reinforces normative masculinity, insofar as it serves as an escape valve for the otherwise domesticated husband, and challenges it.

APPENDIX

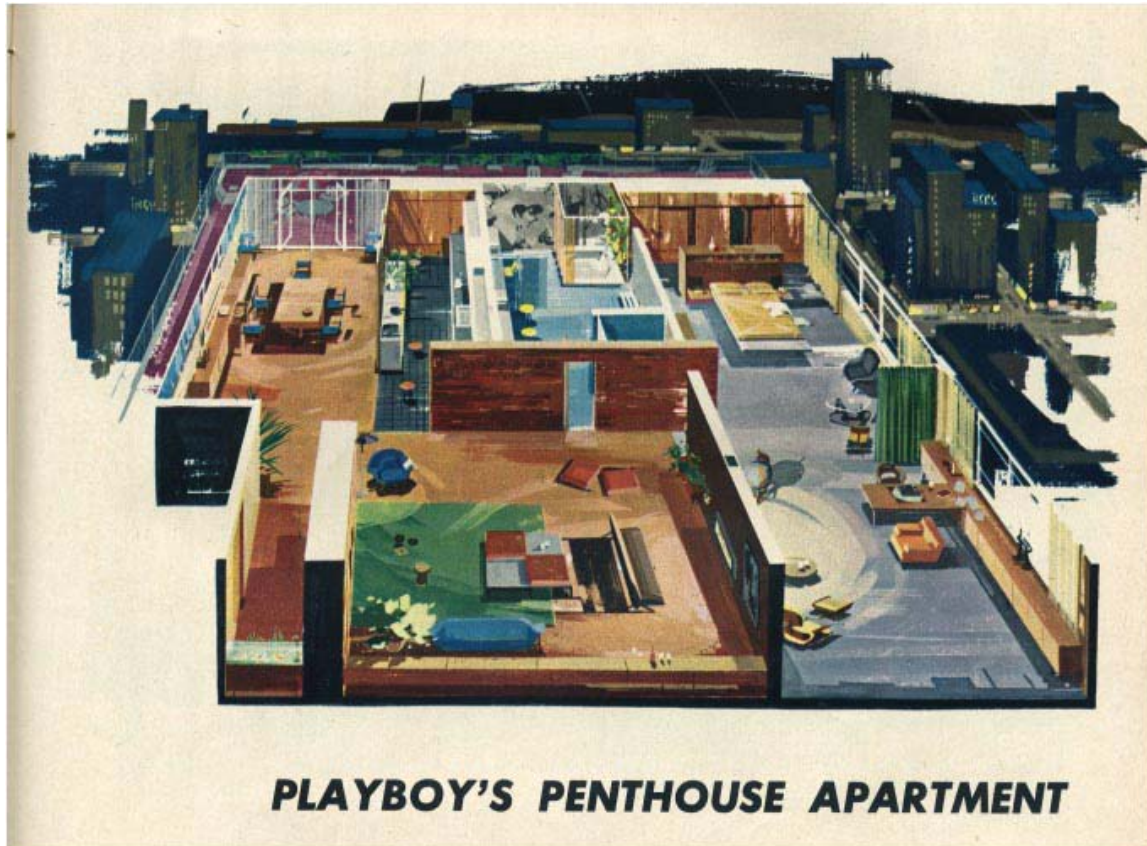


Figure 1. *Playboy's Penthouse Apartment*, *Playboy*, October 1956, 65.

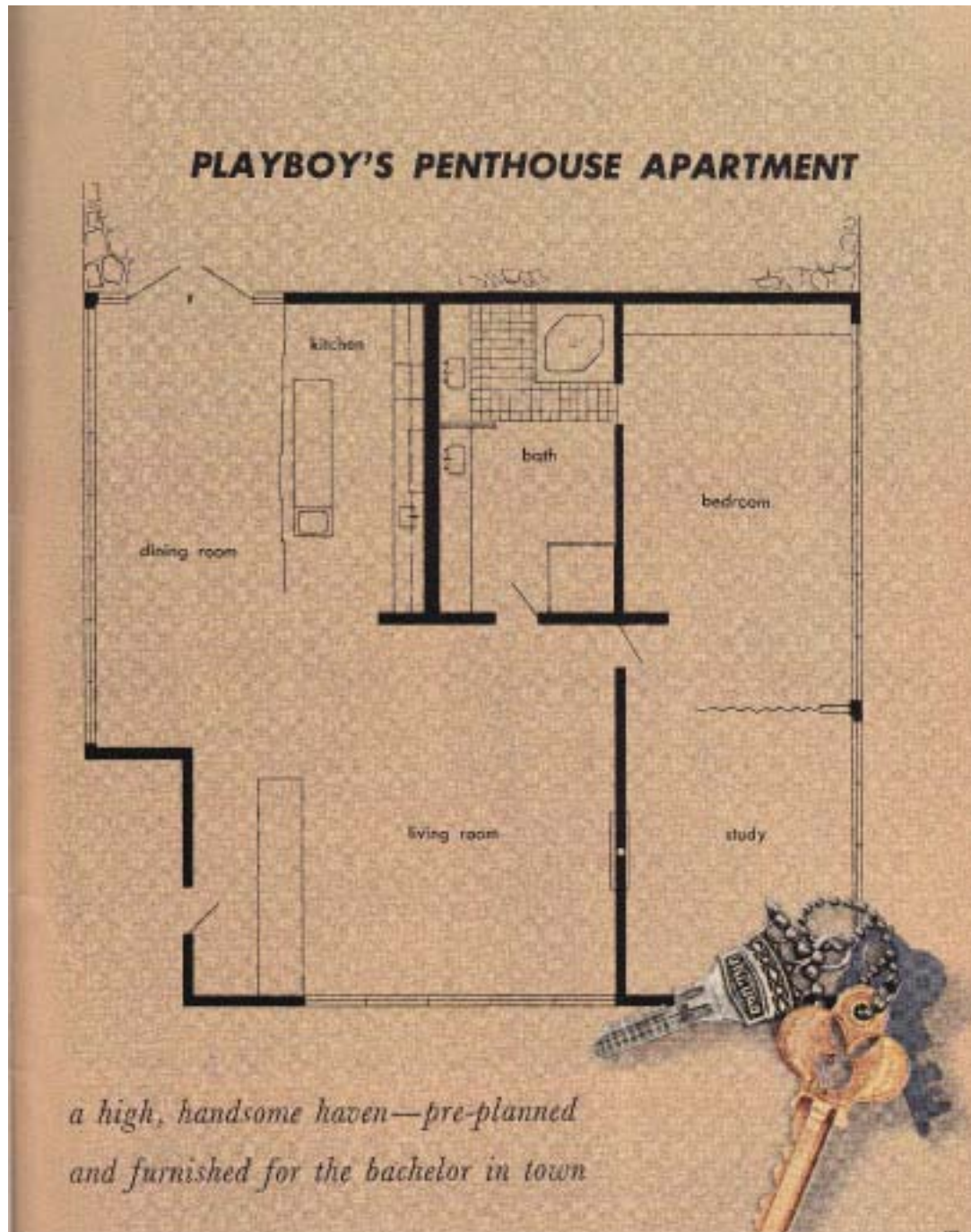


Figure 2. *Playboy's Penthouse Apartment* plan, *Playboy*, September 1956, 53.

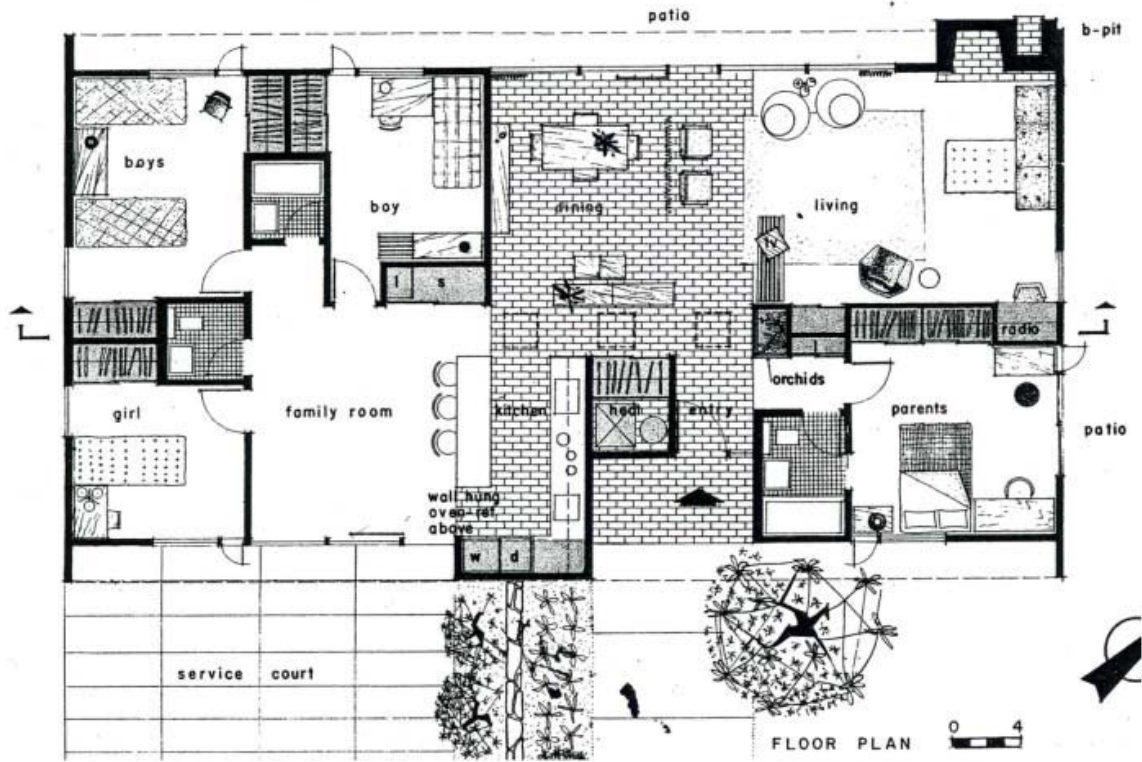


Figure 3. 50 *House Designs*, Indianapolis Home Show, 1956.

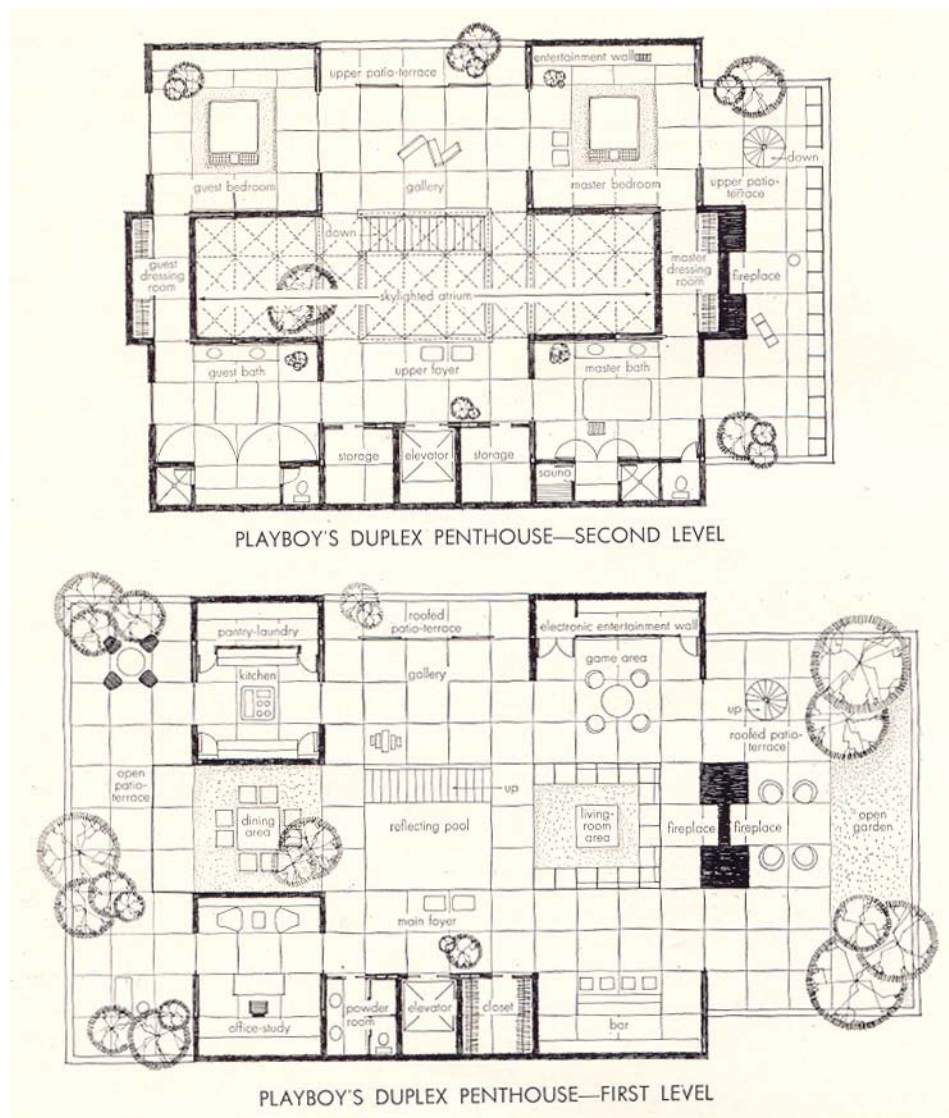


Figure 4. Duplex Penthouse plan, *Playboy*, January 1970, 234.



Figure 5. *Playboy's* Town House Dining Room, *Playboy*, May 1962, 88.



PLAYBOY

BATHROOM

the arms of Morpheus (or a more comely substitute). Do we go through the house turning out the lights and locking up? No sir: flopping on the luxurious bed, we have within easy reach the multiple controls of its unique headboard. Here we have silent mercury switches and a rheostat that control every light in the place and can subtly dim the bedroom lighting to just the right romantic level. Here, too, are the switches which control the circuits for front door and terrace window locks. Beside them are push buttons to draw the continuous, heavy, pure-linen, lined draperies on sail track,

which can insure darkness at morn — or noon. Above are built-in speakers fed by the remotely-controlled hi-fi and radio based in the electronic entertainment installation in the living room. On either side of the bed are storage cupboards with doors that hinge downward to create bedside tables. Within are telephone, with on-off switch for the bell, and miscellaneous bed-time items. Soft mood music flows through the room and the stars shine in the casements as you snuggle down.

At the start of a new day, the chime

Below: The bathroom's slat bench (Knoll #400, \$84) in natural ash has foam rubber cushion cover for sun-lamp bathing. At bottom: Upholstered vanity seat is by Miller (#4672, \$56).



Figure 6. Bathroom, *Playboy's* Penthouse Apartment, *Playboy*, October 1956, 68.



Figure 7. Section, *Playboy's Town House*, *Playboy*, May 1962, 85.



Figure 8. Still from *Pillow Talk*, 1959.

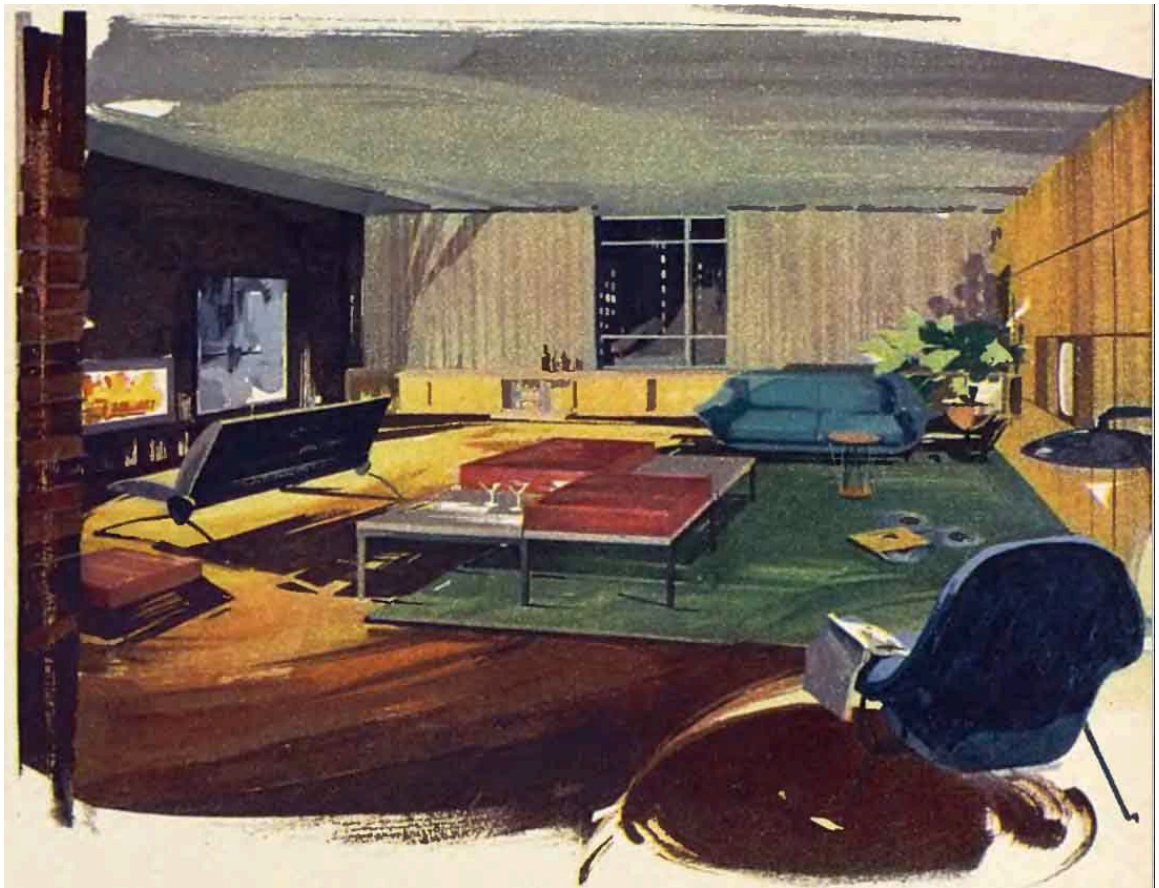


Figure 9. Living room, *Playboy's Penthouse Apartment*, *Playboy*, September 1956, 57.



Figure 10. *Playboy's* Electronic Entertainment Wall, *Playboy*, October 1964, 122-23.

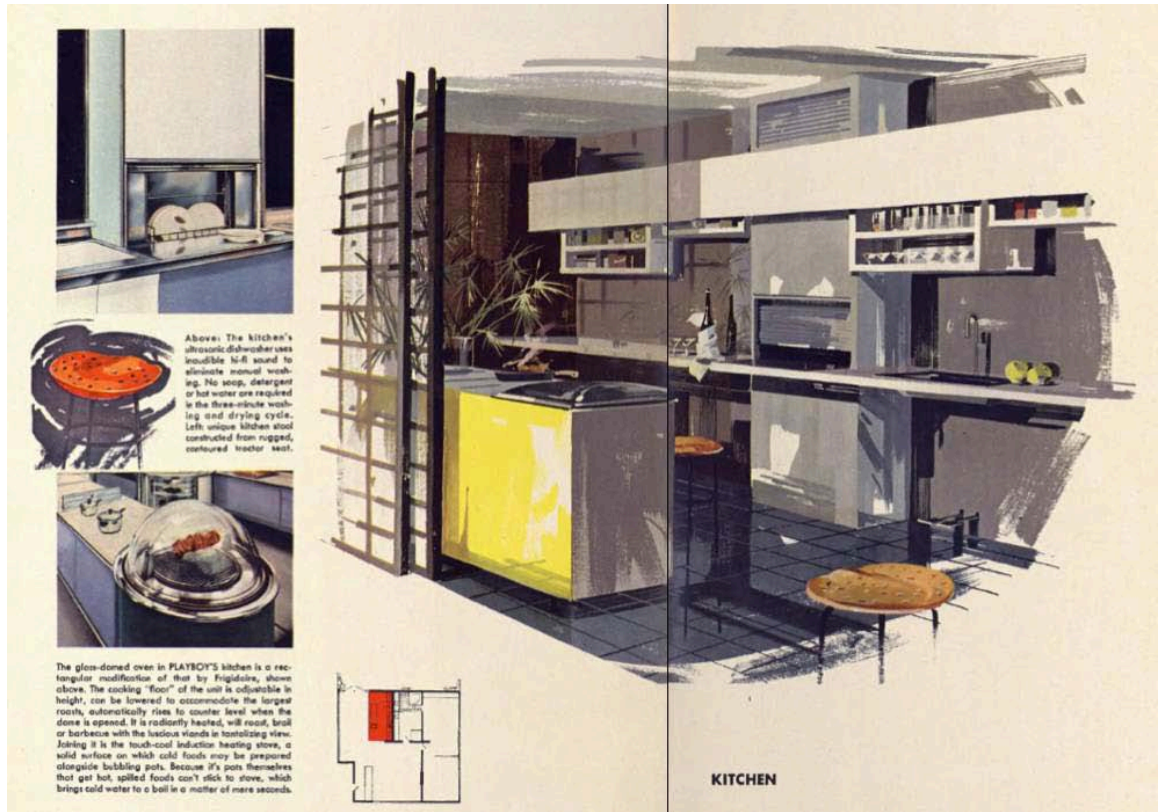


Figure 11. Kitchen, *Playboy's* Penthouse Apartment, *Playboy*, September 1956, 58-59.

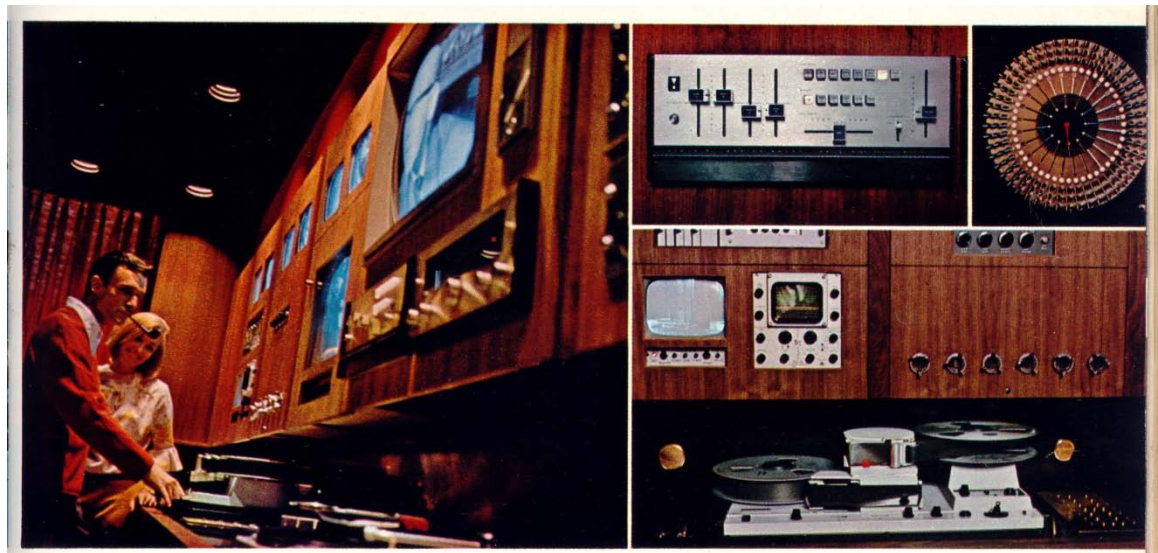


Figure 12. Entertainment wall in The Playboy Mansion, *Playboy*, January 1966, 109.



Figure 13. Tub, "Playboy's House Party," *Playboy*, May 1959.

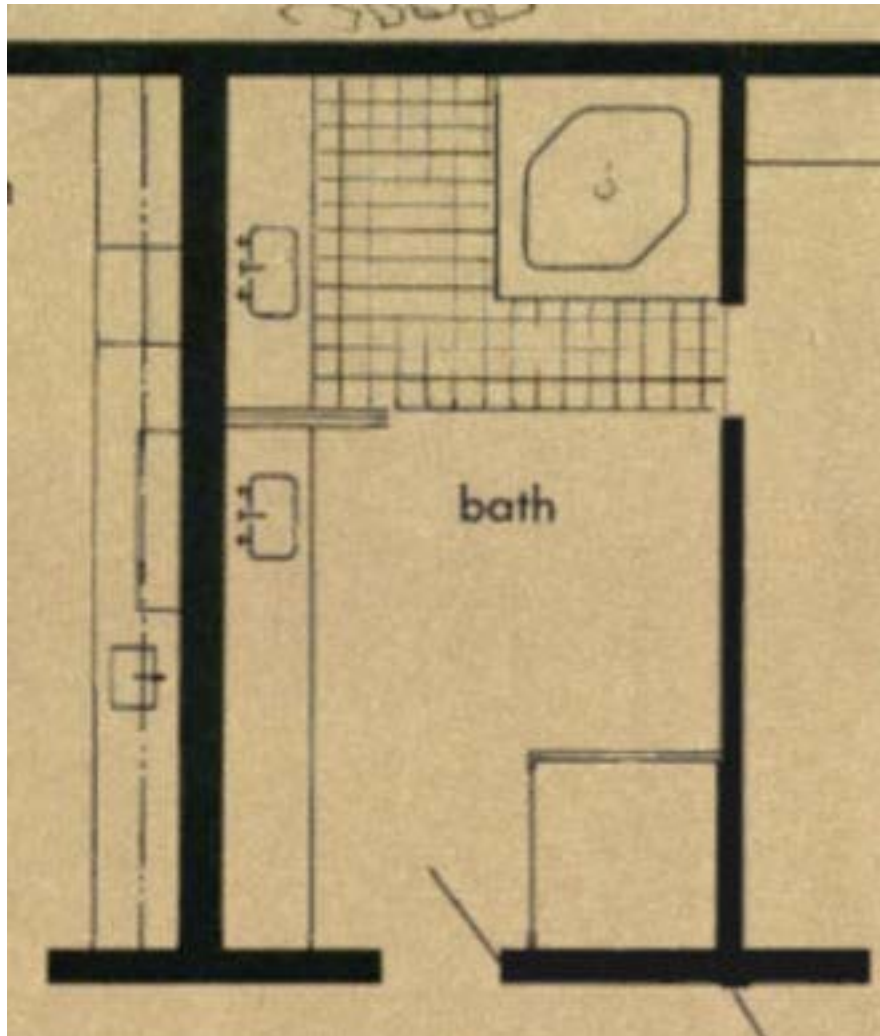


Figure 14. Bathroom plan, *Playboy's Penthouse Apartment*, *Playboy*, September 1956, 53.



Figure 15. The Playboy Bed, *Playboy*, November 1969, 56-57.



Figure 16. The Playboy Bed, *Playboy*, April 1965, 89.

ENDNOTES

1. The first use of the term “bachelor pad” was in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1959; the term was first used in both *Playboy* and the *New York Times* in 1964; before then, they were referred to as bachelor apartments.
2. *Playboy* November 1953, 3.
3. “*Playboy’s* Penthouse Apartment,” *Playboy* October 1956, 65.
4. George B. Leonard, Jr., “The American Male: Why is He Afraid to be Different?” *Look* February 14, 1958, 97.
5. Robert Moskin, “The American Male: Why do Women Dominate Him?” *Look* February 5, 1959, 77-80.
6. Philip Wylie, “The Womanization of America,” *Playboy* October 1958, 77.
7. Wylie, *Womanization*, 77.
8. Wylie, *Womanization*, 77; Robert Moskin, “The American Male: Why do Women Dominate Him?” *Look* February 5, 1959, 80.
9. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., “The Crisis of American Masculinity,” *Esquire* November 1958, 65.
10. See Stephanie Rosenblum, “The Bachelor Pad Still Lives,” *The New York Times* March 26, 2006 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/26/realestate/26cov.html>), which describes the continuing population of bachelor pads in twenty-first-century New York City, and the revival of the bachelor pad in popular films such as the Austin Powers movies and *Down With Love*.
11. US Census Bureau, “Table MS-2. Estimated Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890 to Present,” in “Families and Living Arrangements,” <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam.html>.
12. “Meet the *Playboy* Reader,” *Playboy* April 1958, 76.
13. “*Playboy’s* Penthouse Apartment,” *Playboy*, October 1956, 65.
14. “Weekend Hideaway,” *Playboy* April 1959, 52.

15. *Record Houses of 1957* (F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1957).
16. Talcott Parsons, "The Social Structure of the Family," in *The Family: Its Functions and Destiny*, Ruth Nanda Ashed, ed. (New York: Harper Bros., 1959) 271, quoted in Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996) 245. On the history of the breadwinner, a term that goes back to the early nineteenth century, see Kimmel.
17. Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (New York: Anchor Books, 1983) 14-28.
18. Juliet Kinchin, "Interiors: Nineteenth-Century Essays on the 'Masculine' and the 'Feminine' Room," in *The Gendered Object*, ed. Pat Kirkham (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996) 21.
19. "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," *Playboy* September 1956, 57.
20. "Town House," *Playboy* May 1962, 92.
21. "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," *Playboy* October 1956, 70.
22. "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," *Playboy* September 1956, 59.
23. "Electronic Entertainment Wall," *Playboy* October 1964, 122-125, 164.
24. "Duplex Penthouse," *Playboy* January 1970, 234.
25. "Kitchenless Kitchen," *Playboy*, October 1959, 54-55.
26. "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," *Playboy* September 1956, 60.
27. "Town House," 91. The one exception is the Weekend Hideaway, which includes a rather ordinary stereo set up that takes up only a part of the living room wall. "Playboy's Wonder Wall," *Playboy* November 1971, 124-124, 200-202.
28. "Electronic Entertainment," 164.
29. "Electronic Entertainment," 122.
30. "Electronic Entertainment," 164; "Duplex Penthouse," 233.
31. "Duplex Penthouse," 233.

32. "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," *Playboy* September 1956, 59-60.
33. "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," *Playboy* September 1956, 59.
34. "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," *Playboy* October 1956, 70.
35. We see this fantasy of push button control at its extreme in the 1972 novel and 1975 film *The Stepford Wives*.
36. Byron Worth, "In Praise of the Murphy Bed," *Adam* February 1957, available through Java's Bachelor Pad, <http://javasbachelorpad.com/murphy.html>.
37. Bill Osgerby, "The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon: Masculinity, Consumption and Interior Design in Men's Magazines," *Journal of Design History* 18:1 (2005) 104.
38. Notable among these are Charles Moore ("New Haven Haven," *Playboy* October 1969, 126-129, 186), whose work was later explored as the epitome of queer architecture by Aaron Betsky (*Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire*; New York: William Morrow and Company, 1997, 119-127), and Steve Ostrow ("Surprise Package," *Playboy* August 1972, 121-125), the owner of the Continental Baths, the center of the gay bath scene in 1970s New York City.
39. "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," *Playboy* October 1956, 70.
38. Steven Cohan, *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) 283-284.
41. "The Playboy Coloring Book," *Playboy* January 1963, 77, 74.
42. "Playboy Bed," *Playboy* November 1959, 66-67, 104; "Playboy Bed," *Playboy* April 1965, 88-89, 184.
43. "The Playboy Mansion," *Playboy* January 1966, 110; "The Playboy Bed" *Playboy* April 1965, 184.