

in just two months. Major initiatives involved a bathroom gut, a four-paneled French-door installation, and the removal of a wall, not to mention the usual laundry list of painting, tiling, cabinetry, and appliance installation. "I call it renovation by BlackBerry," says Nate, who checked in with his contractors by e-mail whenever he had a free moment. "I think I visited the place only four times during the entire process."


But it wasn't Nate's hands-off approach that made his contractor anxious. "It's that he didn't want the place to look new," contractor Randy Polumbo says. Nate wanted to make sure the apartment didn't seem perfect—that it looked "archaeological."

And Nate couldn't be happier with the end product. As he walks through the apartment today, it's those imperfections he points out first. "I can't wait to see the seams in the wood [of the floor] start to separate," he says. "My joy is old things, the soul of things."



The anecdotes alone in this apartment require their own storage space.

The apartment's soul was intact, but it was time to give the place some heart. Nate was able to do for himself what he has long been doing for others: create a home that really reflects its owner. And he didn't let his apartment's modest size stifle his decorating endeavour. "Whatever didn't work or fit here," Nate says, "would just make it back to the Chicago apartment." A decorator's cheat, no doubt, but he owns up to only one mistake along the way (a too-large bookshelf). He mixed new and vintage purchases from his favorite resources. Practically every other object on display is a gift from a friend, something made by a friend, or a souvenir from a trip he took with a friend. The anecdotes alone in this apartment require their own storage space.

"This is more than a pied-à-terre, it's an extension of my home in Chicago," he says, pointing to a print by artist Günther Förg (it's one of a series of three; the two others hang in his Chicago apartment). "It's really important that we always remember that connective tissue." 

LEFT: Nate turned one end of the living room into an office and entertainment space. The desk is a factory table he found at Scout, in Chicago; the chair, a 1950s Fratelli Campana. The jute rug is from Pottery Barn. The porcelain Nymphenburg rhino was a birthday gift from a friend.