

A GLANCE THROUGH A BACHELORS' PICTURE WINDOW: *PLAYBOY* AND THE  
TRANSFORMATION OF THE FEMININE FAMILY ROOM INTO A MASCULINE  
ENTERTAINMENT ROOM AND DEN OF SEDUCTION

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“My own pad!” Howard Sprague proudly exclaimed while standing in the living room of the home he, until recently, shared with his mother. A hasty decision to get married made by Mrs. Sprague and her love interest, George, afforded Howard the opportunity to live on his own for the first time. After the wedding bells rang, the former Mrs. Sprague left Mayberry for Mount Pilot where she would live with her new spouse. Prior to her departure, much of Howard’s character and way of living was shaped by his mother, “who never allowed him to do anything.”<sup>1</sup> Liberated from her control, Howard could live in his mothers’ home however he chose to now that the place was his. First, he removed every feminine touch from the living room. His mothers’ golden-brown couch set, fern green drapes, secretary desk, potted plants, oriental area rugs, and country cottage painting above the mantelpiece were all replaced by selections he made in modern home furnishings and decor. The cozy, feminine, rural living room was transformed into a cool, masculine, “urban” pad once Howard laid down his bear skin rug and satin floor pillows, placed a bar where his mothers’ desk had been, set up his stereo equipment on the potted plant stand, and hung red drapes in the windows, a beaded curtain in the archway, and an abstract painting by the fire place. His friends Andy, Goober, and Emmitt were the first to see the transformation. While they glanced around the room Howard stated: “I feel that all of this is the real me. I’ve always thought that a bachelors’ pad should reveal the true personality of its owner.”<sup>2</sup>

It is unclear whether or not the writers’ intent for this 1968 episode of the *Andy Griffith Show* titled “The Wedding” was to provide social commentary on the domestic ideology of the period that decorator is a feminine role. However, this onscreen conversion of a mother’s living room into a bachelor’s entertainment room can be analyzed as a form of rebellion against this societal belief. By embracing the hip, urban bachelor “lifestyle” that was popular in 1960s, Howard separated himself from the way fellow Mayberry bachelors Andy and Goober lived. The widowed Andy had his home decorated by Aunt Bee while the working class bachelor Goober had nothing more than a cot and a lamp in his apartment. It was Howard’s unattached and middle class status that permitted him to turn his country home into a trendy pad. After claiming the once feminine domestic sphere as his own, Howard shed his former personality as a bow tie wearing, repressed momma’s boy and became an ascot wearing man confident enough to display his masculine taste through the consumption of home goods.

Personal and spatial transformations of this kind were advised by the editors of *Playboy*, a men’s entertainment magazine first published by its founder Hugh Hefner in December 1953. According to the pages of *Playboy*, young men like Howard were discontent with their home life. It was the control that their wives, not their mothers, had over them that was contributing to their unhappiness. However, wives were committing the same offense as Howard’s mother: emasculating the home through feminine interior design. Firmly believing that men needed a permanent escape from feminine spaces as a result of this, *Playboy* “represented bachelorhood as a form of male liberation from [postwar] domestic

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Michael Kelly, *The Andy Griffith Show*, (Winston-Salem, NC: J.F. Blair, 1981) 64.

<sup>2</sup> YouTube. “The Andy Griffith Show (S8E26) - The Wedding(2/2)” Accessed October 25, 2010.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGZn0MWWHFk&feature=related>

ideology.”<sup>3</sup> By remaining single, a man would have complete control over the house. He would design how the interior looked based on his own tastes and determine how each room should function. By arguing that single men needed to claim the domestic sphere as theirs, *Playboy* was a mobilizing force in producing shifts in masculinity.<sup>4</sup> This new masculinity grounded in the concept that men need more indoor spaces to call their own was admired and embraced most strongly between its launching in 1953 and the late 1960s; the same time when suburban married life was increasingly advertised as the right way to live. Men looking at the detailed illustrations of fantasy bachelor pads featured in *Playboy* imagined themselves in a modern, “feminine touch free” living room with a dual function: entertainment followed by seduction. Here they would provide anyone peering through their picture window with a scene of passion roused by mood music, cocktails, and casual, sophisticated conversation; a masculine alternative to the trap of feminine, suburban married life.

In the postwar era, men reclaimed the production oriented public sphere, which women had entered during the war to produce supplies for troops and provide for their families while their husbands were overseas. With women back home in the consumption oriented private sphere, print and televised advertisements began to increasingly market home goods toward them. Women’s magazines like *Woman’s Day*, *Good Housekeeping* and *Ladies Home Journal* functioned as handbooks for women to learn how to take on their newly designated role as primary consumer.<sup>5</sup> Purchasing home goods, as well as arranging them for display became a strictly feminine activity after the war. Husbands only provided their wives with the money to buy these items; they did not assist them with decorating or make any catalog orders for home furnishings themselves. As a result, the home became gendered as well since it was women who were determining how it should look.

The domestic ideology that wives were responsible for designing the living space for their family coupled with the need for repetition created by mass production led almost every home to look the same.<sup>6</sup> Articles in *Ladies Home Journal* with titles including “The Ideal Kitchen” and “Looking into Other Women’s Homes” helped to promote this cultural phenomenon. They encouraged women to keep up with their neighbors by replicating the staged interiors.<sup>7</sup> Thus, there was little variation between each home since every woman in the neighborhood was modeling the rooms in their home after the same magazine image. Their middle class status enabled them to afford these products, which were often low-priced to begin with because they were mass produced.

Colorful advertisements, like those in the May 1952 issue of *Woman’s Day*, were often strategically placed in the outer margins of each page to catch the eye of the reader while they thumbed through the magazine. Most informed mother’s that through a simple purchase their jobs would become a lot easier. Fire-King Ovenware, for example, would save them from dish-washings since the “baked-on” foods washed right off the smooth, round edges.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the “roomy” G-E Refrigerator made food storage a cinch since it was a combination freezer and refrigerator; allowing everything to be “kept in its proper place at the proper temperature.”<sup>9</sup> Technology did help make daily chores including dish-washing and

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<sup>3</sup> Steven Cohan, “So Functional for Its Purposes,” in Joel Sanders ed., *Stud: Architectures of Masculinity*, (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996) 30.

<sup>4</sup> Bentham Benwell ed., *Masculinity and Men’s Lifestyle Magazines*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 7.

<sup>5</sup> Joan Kron, *Home-Psych: The Social Psychology of Home and Decoration*, (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc./Publishers, 1983) 117.

<sup>6</sup> Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*, (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1979) 167.

<sup>7</sup> Susan J. Matt, *Keeping Up with the Joneses: Envy in American Consumer Society, 1890-1930*, (Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania P., 2002) 15.

<sup>8</sup> *Woman’s Day*, May, 1952, 18.

<sup>9</sup> *Woman’s Day*, May 1952, 21.

grocery shopping easier for housewives. Also, the money it saved them could be spent on items that would add a certain charm to their kitchen or living room. Women migrated back and forth between these two rooms most often; therefore it was important that these spaces reflected their personal tastes in design. Kitchens could instantly become more exciting by applying colorful “Plasti-Chrome” Roylege adhesive patterns to shelves.<sup>10</sup> Some excitement could be added to the living room just as easily. For only twenty-five cents, a chair’s slipcover or curtains could be made to look brand new simply by dyeing the fabric in All Purpose Rit.<sup>11</sup> Even for middle class women, home renovations were costly; therefore these quick and inexpensive ways to upgrade interiors were invaluable to the women who tried them.

These modifications to the home were often made in order to impress other women in the neighborhood; rather than husbands and children. It was the wide, picture window in the living room that necessitated conspicuous consumption.<sup>12</sup> When the curtains were drawn back, everything in the room was on display. The next door neighbors, in particular, were expected to look in and grow envious of what they saw. Also, women hoped that the living room would provide those peering through the window with a positive first impression of their family. Acknowledging this, a 1945 advertisement for Kroehler Comfort Construction Furniture assured women that their, “live-in room’ would say – ‘happy people live here!’” (see figure 1). Through the bay window of the advertisement’s illustrated living room, the house across the street can be seen. Its front door and picture window appears to be aligned with this homes’ front door and living room window making them mirror images, at least externally. Anyone looking into the window from across the way would see a bright, colorful, and cozy living room. Radiating hospitality (as stated on the advertisement), a living room like this enticed other women in the neighborhood to ask the decorator if they could see it up close.

In addition to these informal drop-ins where wives and mothers would converse casually about interior design, formal invitations for dinner parties were also made. Along with advice on how to be an excellent consumer, women’s magazines also provided tips on entertaining. To supplement the articles on entertaining published each month, women could purchase the *Good Housekeeping Party Book* (1949), for example. Recipes for food and drink were included along with directions on how to make the event successful. Featured on the first page is an illustration of the gracious hostess; a woman wearing a little black dress greeting guests with a warm smile at the door. On the same page, the editors take note of the fact that while some women are as eager as the one in the illustration to entertain, others are not. However, all were informed that entertaining is a responsibility of community life, parenthood, and business.<sup>13</sup> Women planned social gatherings including luncheons, dinners, and cocktail parties because fostering togetherness within the neighborhood was part of their role as housewife.

Although husbands attended the parties their wives planned, they did not plan any themselves. Men did not entertain other men indoors. They did not invite them over to marvel at the living room furniture or to sip coffee in the kitchen. In fact, if men did socialize in the home, homosexuality was often thought of as the cause.<sup>14</sup> To confirm their heterosexuality and masculinity, men spent most of their time outside. Hours were put into maintaining the exterior of the house and more specifically the front lawn. In the suburban neighborhood, the lawn functioned as a second living room; it also gave the neighbors a

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<sup>10</sup> *Women’s Day*, May 1952, 51.

<sup>11</sup> *Women’s Day*, May 1952, 36.

<sup>12</sup> William H. Whyte Jr., *The Organization Man*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956) 352.

<sup>13</sup> Dorothy Marsh and Carol Brock, eds., *Good Housekeeping Party Book*, (NY: Harpers & Bros. Pubs., 1949) 1.

<sup>14</sup> Kron, *Home-Psych: The Social Psychology of Home and Decoration*, 114.

*And Our "Live-in" Room Will Say-*  
**"HAPPY PEOPLE LIVE HERE!"**



**ADD HAPPINESS TO YOUR HOME WITH  
 NEW KROEHLER *Comfort Construction* FURNITURE!**

*Here's* a real "Live-in" Room! No stands-offish atmosphere here. This room radiates hospitality, encourages companionship, nurtures happiness. You, your youngsters, and friends will cherish every hour spent here.

*Plus* yours today with Kroehler furniture. New, 5-Star Comfort Construction takes an almost personal interest in your comfort. Helps you relax by shaping instantly to you.

*Still*, it's so economical. Ask grandmother what a value Kroehler now offers, compared to furniture of her newwed days. Let your authorized Kroehler dealer help you plan your "Live-In" Room now!

Only Kroehler Has 5-Star  
*Comfort Construction*

Springs that shape to you... do not lose their shape. Cushions with no lumps or bumps. Under-constructors that will not sag. Handwood frames that will not break down. Clean, new materials and expert workmanship inside and out.

**KROEHLER** (Say KRAY-LEE)  
*Furniture*



Look for the Kroehler Label - Your Assurance of Famous Kroehler 5-Star Comfort Construction.

WORLD'S LARGEST FURNITURE MANUFACTURER

Figure 1

From: "Happy People Live Here" No Accounting For Taste (blog), Tuesday, May 6, 2008., <http://www.noaccountingfortaste.com/?cat=6&paged=4>.

first impression of the family it belonged to.<sup>15</sup> Husbands and fathers took pride in the care they gave to the front lawn. This outdoor space was one they controlled and could claim as their own.

For most men, the only indoor male space was the basement. Downstairs below the other rooms in the house was where they went while inside to escape from women and all things feminine.<sup>16</sup> Each individual man may not have been content with only going back and forth between the outdoors and the basement. However, this was how suburban family life was intended to be according to advertisements in magazines and popular television shows among other cultural texts. Few men felt the need to argue with this. With their masculinity and sexuality on the line, making demands for more space in the home was rendered foolish. The home was, after all, a feminine space and decorating was a feminine activity. This was a myth that men created, along with the ideology of separate spheres, to confirm their masculinity. Why, then, would they want to dismantle it? The only way to prevent their identity as the antithesis of all things feminine from being tarnished would be to transform interior decorating into a masculine activity.

A feature story in the *Chicago Daily News* in 1953, titled “How a Cartoonist Lives,” revealed that one man in particular had challenged the domestic ideology of the period by taking on the role of decorator in his family’s apartment. This man was Chicago native Hugh Hefner, whose “taste for modern decor and clever use of cartoons to decorate the nursery” were highlighted in photographs that appeared in the two page spread.<sup>17</sup> In one photograph, Hefner is shown seated on the living room floor holding his baby daughter Christie while his wife Millie is seated on the couch with what appears to be a magazine lying open on her lap (see figure 2). Anyone in the adjacent apartment peering through the two fixed windows behind the couch would see that the space differed greatly from the room in the Kroehler advertisement, for example. Unlike the busy, colorful, floral print curtains hanging above the picture window in the advertisement, Hefner’s patterned curtains were minimalist. Similarly, his floor lamp had a cool, functional look that contrasted from the decorative table lamp. The unique, modern pieces on the coffee table were a masculine alternative to cluttering the room with potted plants. With Hefner as the decorator, the living room was absent of the feminine touch that women’s magazines, like the one Millie may have been reading when the photograph was taken, encouraged wives and mothers to give to each room.

In the same year that this photograph appeared in the *Chicago Daily News*, Hefner published the first issue of *Playboy*, the men’s entertainment magazine he founded. The articles, fiction pieces, and later advertisements were all marketing the “lifestyle” Hefner fantasized himself having one day to young men. The magazine informed its middle class, male audience that there was more to life than marriage. It was the role of bachelor not breadwinner that *Playboy* prescribed to men. Hefner’s own discontent with married life was rooted in the knowledge he had that while he and Millie were engaged, she had an affair with “a coach at the school where she was teaching.”<sup>18</sup> Hefner forgave Millie and did not break off the engagement. However, he felt betrayed and, according to Steven Watts, author of the biography *Mr. Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream*, the affair seems to be what caused Hefner to distrust the notion of commitment to, and from, women.<sup>19</sup> He needed an antidote to the pain Millie caused him, which

<sup>15</sup> Ted Steinberg, *American Green: The Obsessive Quest for the Perfect Lawn*, (NY: W. W. Norton & Co., 2007) 27.

<sup>16</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, “A Feminist’s View of the New Man” in Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, eds *Men’s Lives*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1989) 34.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 2009) 15.

<sup>18</sup> Steven Watts, *Mr. Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008) 47.

<sup>19</sup> Watts, *Mr. Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream*, 48.



*Figure 2*

*From: Elizabeth Fraterrigo, Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America, (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 2009) 16.*

ironically he thought could be found in open relationships with multiple women.

Although either remaining in or returning to a state of bachelorhood was what Hefner promoted in *Playboy*, he, along with most other men, could only fantasize about this. Marriage was an integral part of life for middle class Americans, in particular, during the postwar era. It was a rite of passage that confirmed a man's heterosexuality perhaps more so than spending time outdoors. Since marriage was a prerequisite to having sex, married men were informing the rest of society that they were being intimate with a woman. As a result, a man's single status would then signify "latent homosexuality."<sup>20</sup> To prevent anyone from thinking of them as homosexuals men typically married at a young age to show that they

<sup>20</sup> Cohan, "So Functional for Its Purposes: Rock Hudson's Bachelor Apartment in Pillow Talk" in *Stud: Architectures of Masculinity*, 29.

were in love with a woman and planned on having a family like everyone else. Men actively created this myth that heterosexuality was linked to the state of marriage and nearly all felt pressured to live by it.

In addition to the role of husband and father, men were expected to take on the role of breadwinner. As the primary producer for their family, men entered the public sphere where most middle class men held office jobs and were required to wear suits to work. Without the ability to express themselves through their attire, all men began to take on the same look. This revealed that the need for repetition in the postwar era extended beyond the home. In 1956, journalist William H. Whyte wrote in his book *The Organization Man* that “The Organization demands conformity” and “asks for the individuals psyche.”<sup>21</sup> Was this loss of soul truly necessary for men to prove to other men that they were heterosexual? A *Playboy* article featured in the July 1964 issue titled “The Homogenized Man: A Plea for the Preservation of the Individual in our Increasingly Pigeonholed Society” examined The Organization (or American society) similarly to how Whyte had years earlier. It informed readers that some men “refuse to join the cults of conformists, status seekers, and organization men.”<sup>22</sup> Knowing that others were also discontent with this way of life and were choosing alternatives helped to make the role of bachelor over breadwinner seem possible.

At the same time that the pages of *Playboy* were abdicating the breadwinner role, those who identified themselves as part of the Beat Generation were also liberating themselves from the trap of suburban family life. Beats were fellow nonconformists looking to only pursue pleasure in life. As members of a counterculture, the Beats were criticized by most “mainstream” middle-class Americans for their evasion of social reality.<sup>23</sup> Hefner acknowledged that Playboys had the potential to be under the same scrutiny. To prevent this, he argued in *The Playboy Philosophy* (1954) that Playboys were part of the Upbeat Generation. This name was borrowed from an article in *Life* titled “Take-Over Generation,” which claimed:

“The Upbeats can enjoy kicking up their heels, participating in the same sort of fun and frivolity for which the ‘20s are most famous, but they are equally capable of knuckling down to a particular job and getting it done.”<sup>24</sup>

Connecting the Playboy lifestyle to the Upbeat Generation allowed Hefner to assure Americans that hedonism did not require people to leave work and live in voluntary poverty. In fact, the Playboy lifestyle was something men had to buy into; therefore they needed to work hard to earn spending money. It was this patronage to materialism that made the Playboy lifestyle less threatening to the foundations of American life than the Beat culture.

Articles in *Playboy* taught men how to be consumers. The products marketed toward them would function quite differently for them than the products women purchased. For example, unlike Kroehler Furniture, which promised to present happiness to the neighborhood, modern Knoll furnishings were advertised as masculine pieces that would aid in the art of seduction. To further convince men that they needed to buy the products highlighted, the editors assured them that it was their ability to live in style that made men irresistible to women.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps there was truth to this statement, but what could the

<sup>21</sup> Whyte, *The Organization Man*, 171, 201.

<sup>22</sup> J. Paul Getty “The Homogenized Man: A Plea for the Preservation of the Individual in our Increasingly Pigeonholed Society,” *Playboy*, August 1964, 129.

<sup>23</sup> Cornelius A. van Minnen, Jaap van der Bent and David Amram, *Beat Culture: The 1950s and Beyond*, (Amsterdam: VU U. P., 1999) 280.

<sup>24</sup> Hugh Hefner, *The Playboy Philosophy*, Part 1, Installment 2, (Chicago: HMH Publishing Co., Inc., 1962) 13.

<sup>25</sup> Lynne Luciano, *Looking Good: Male Body Image in Modern America*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001) 81.

average reader of *Playboy*, a married man, (at least when it was first published) do with this knowledge? While he may have wanted to make himself available to more women than his wife, societal customs and moral values made both premarital and extramarital sexual relations taboo.

As a result, for *Playboy's* advertising of an alternative lifestyle to be successful, support from an external source was needed. This was found in the Kinsey Report: *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. Zoologist Alfred C. Kinsey interviewed and administered surveys created by staff members at Indiana University to 5,300 white males in order to gain "data about sex from scientific fact that was completely divorced from questions of moral value and social custom."<sup>26</sup> It is questionable how statistically significant or "scientific" these survey responses were since sexual behavior varies among each individual and therefore cannot be generalized. However, there is no doubt that this report was socially significant. Kinsey's findings, published in 1948, did help to break Americans from the belief ingrained in most of them through informal and formal education that a man's interest in sex is solely to witness the joy of childbirth nine months later. According to the men interviewed, the reality was that all American men were sex crazed.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the baby boom that occurred in the postwar era was a testament to this. Men and women were expected to perform the act of sex for reproductive purposes only; therefore the birth rate increased regardless of whether individual families wanted more children or not. This social custom was linked to another; waiting to have sex after marriage. With marriage as a prerequisite for sex, and sex being interpreted as fulfilling reproductive needs only, single, widowed, and divorced men were left without a socio-sexual outlet.<sup>28</sup> The report revealed the dangers of this by informing Americans that since men needed to have sex, some would substitute homosexual relations for "less readily available heterosexual contacts."<sup>29</sup> Hugh Hefner used this finding to support the swinging single campaign he launched when *Playboy* was first published. It enabled him to argue that bachelorhood should be a socially acceptable state for men to remain in so their sexual behavior will no longer have to stray from heterosexual norms.

To confirm that taking interest in interior design and modern furnishings was not a way of straying from heterosexual norms, *Playboy* published an article by Philip Wylie titled "The Womanization of America" in the September 1958 issue. The author of *Generation of Vipers* (1942), in which he described the threat of "Momism," was describing here the threat of women invading male spaces and converting them into female spaces. Some men could argue that since they preferred spending time outdoors, the "womanization" of the suburban family home was not threatening; rather it was an intended outcome of living by the ideology of separate spheres. However, Wylie warned that someday what men will be doing outside will only be to match the "overall design-feeling" the woman has created inside the home.<sup>30</sup> The front lawn would then become an extension of the living room instead of a second living room and, therefore, more space for a woman to control. What was so dangerous about this conversion of once male spaces into female spaces within the home was that emasculation of the home leads to the emasculation of its male inhabitants.<sup>31</sup> When a home does not reflect that a man lives there not a single room within it will exist as a male space. As a result, the man himself will cease to exist as male. According to Wylie, man needed to know and appreciate art, which historically has been a male endeavor and triumph, to halt this process.<sup>32</sup> By framing the knowledge of art as something that once

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<sup>26</sup> Alfred C. Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co., 1948) 3.

<sup>27</sup> Gary Cross, *Men to Boys: The Making of Modern Immaturity* (New York: Columbia U. P., 2008) 71.

<sup>28</sup> Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 263.

<sup>29</sup> Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 289.

<sup>30</sup> Philip Wylie, "The Womanization of America," *Playboy*, September 1958, 51.

<sup>31</sup> Wylie, "The Womanization of America," *Playboy*, 77.

<sup>32</sup> Wylie, "The Womanization of America," *Playboy*, 78.



belonged to males and therefore needs to be reclaimed made it safe for men to begin thinking about how they would design the home.

While women reading *Ladies Home Journal* were looking into other women's homes for tips on feminine interior design, men reading *Playboy* began looking into other men's homes for tips on masculine interior design. A man's interest in learning how to properly design a pad extended beyond making the neighbors envious; he wanted to join in the moral crusade to stop the widespread emasculation Wylie claimed was occurring in America. In addition, men wanted to learn how a few purchases could transform their living room into a den of seduction. Both the imagined and real life bachelor pads featured in *Playboy's* Modern Living section aided in producing this new masculine function for the living room. The first imagined interior was "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment." Appearing in parts, the first in the September 1956 issue and the second the following month, the illustrated spread showed first a basic floor plan and then an elaborate, cutaway view of the furnished apartment. Men glancing at the detailed illustration saw what the domestic sphere had potential to look like if masculine pieces filled each room. To comfort men and alleviate any possible fears that they would be thought of, particularly by other men, as queer for admiring a domestic space, *Playboy's* editors informed them that "a man yearns for quarters of his own. More than a place to hang his hat, a man dreams of his own domain, a place that is exclusively his."<sup>33</sup> By presenting this as a factual statement that all men wanted their own pad, anxieties about signaling homosexuality were eradicated.

The living room in the bachelor pad, as it was in the suburban home, was centrally located and provided anyone looking up into the casement window wall with an impression of the decorator, as well as the rest of the space. Like the seating arrangement in the Kroehler advertisement, the seating in the penthouse apartment was located in the middle of the room. The Saarinen couch produced by Knoll could be flipped on its back with the touch of a button turning either the fireplace or the entertainment wall into the focal point.<sup>34</sup> Dividing the living room from the foyer, the entertainment wall helped to close in the space; making it more private and intimate. According to the editors of *Playboy*, this room divider was a must have because it gave a bachelor's guests something to marvel at. Those who approached it for a closer inspection were informed by the collection of jazz records and hi-fi stereo equipment it housed that the bachelor was both cultured and up to speed with the current technological trend. In addition, the jazz records served as a reminder that the Playboy lifestyle was partly a revival of an earlier period of hard work and play, the 1920s.

Years later in the Modern Living section of the October 1964 issue, the entertainment wall was given its own feature titled: "Playboy's Electronic Entertainment Wall." As a furniture unit that could actually be purchased, it promised to keep the bachelor and his company indoors and at ease in the conversation room.<sup>35</sup> The music playing in the background served as a conversation starter and gave both the bachelor and his guests something to listen to during breaks in the conversation. Neither the bachelor nor his guests would have been comfortable just sitting there in silence so the music always stayed on. When the couch was facing the entertainment wall, the four square tables placed together in front of it could easily be turned into extra seating by placing foam rubber cushions on top of each to create a casual lounging area.<sup>36</sup> This rather intimate seating arrangement was quite unlike the traditional suburban living room of the time period. Housewives would not have offered their dinner party guests a seat on the coffee table. Also, when extra seating was brought out, it would not have been placed so close

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<sup>33</sup> "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," *Playboy*, September 1956, 54.

<sup>34</sup> "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," *Playboy*, September 1956, 57.

<sup>35</sup> "Playboy's Electronic Entertainment Wall," *Playboy*, (Chicago: HMH Pub. Co. Inc., October 1964) 110-112.

<sup>36</sup> "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," *Playboy*, September 1956, 57.

together like the four square tables in the penthouse living room. Women wanted their living room arrangement to be cozy, while providing their guests with an appropriate amount of distance from each other. It would be both socially unacceptable and uncomfortable for one man to be sitting close to someone else's wife, for example. Meanwhile, men wanted their living room arrangement to "breed a certain intimacy," like the satin floor pillows on Howard's floor.<sup>37</sup> Since the majority of their guests would be single, it was important for the bachelor to aid all of them in loosening their sexual restraints.

When the party ended, the bachelor could flip the couch over to face the fireplace. This would allow him, and the one female guest who agreed to stay just a few moments longer, to get to know each other better while watching the flickering flame. The ability for the bachelor to flip the couch over simply at the touch of a button reveals the dualistic function of this space. A bachelor's living room was both a masculine entertainment room (for guests of either sex) and a den of seduction (for guests of the opposite sex only). With the entertainment wall now behind him and his young, beautiful, single female companion, the bachelor would swap out the upbeat jazz record for a little "mood music." Projecting warmth and a light glow on the couch, the fire place created "a confined area, a romantic setting for a tête-à-tête."<sup>38</sup> This was essential since, after all, the bachelor had not asked the young lady to stay and chat about interior design over a cup of coffee. Rather, he was in need of a [hetero]sexual outlet and wanted to slowly lure her into the bedroom. Several features of the room in addition to the fireplace aided the bachelor in the art of seduction. Technology in particular helped to make his job easier (quite differently than the G-E refrigerator did for the housewife though). To create mood lighting without interrupting a passionate moment, the lights could be set on a timer to slowly dim automatically. The mini bar on the entertainment wall saved the bachelor from making a trip to the kitchen and ensured that his date would not lose interest like she might have if left alone in the room.<sup>39</sup> In fact, his date may remain so wrapped up in him that the bachelor will have to make future plans for a second prolonged visit.

*Playboy's* second fantasy den of seduction was removed not only from the suburbs, but the urban setting as well. On every page of every other issue men were told that urban city life would offer them a permanent escape from married life. Now the editors were convincing them that they needed a temporary escape from city's "madding crowd."<sup>40</sup> Featured in the April 1959 issue, "Playboy's Weekend Hideaway" gave bachelors a second place to bring their dates. Since most of the excitement in their relationship was tied to a bachelor's ability to live in luxury, he needed to show his date more in order to prevent her from getting bored with either the space or him. Dates were instantly thrilled by what was ahead of them as the bachelor pulled his roadster into the driveway. Almost the entire interior can be seen through the floor to ceiling windows and glass sliding panels that make up each wall (see figure 3). Like the big picture window in the suburban living room, these windows enticed women to step inside for a closer look. In addition, the glass walls create an indoor-outdoor feeling allowing the playboy to enjoy nature without leaving the house.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> YouTube. "The Andy Griffith Show (S8E26) - The Wedding(2/2)" Accessed October 25, 2010.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGZn0MWWHFk&feature=related>

<sup>38</sup> "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," *Playboy*, September 1956, 57.

<sup>39</sup> "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," *Playboy*, 59.

<sup>40</sup> "Playboy's Weekend Hideaway," *Playboy*, April 1959, 49-53.

<sup>41</sup> "Playboy's Weekend Hideaway," *Playboy*, April 1959, 49-53.

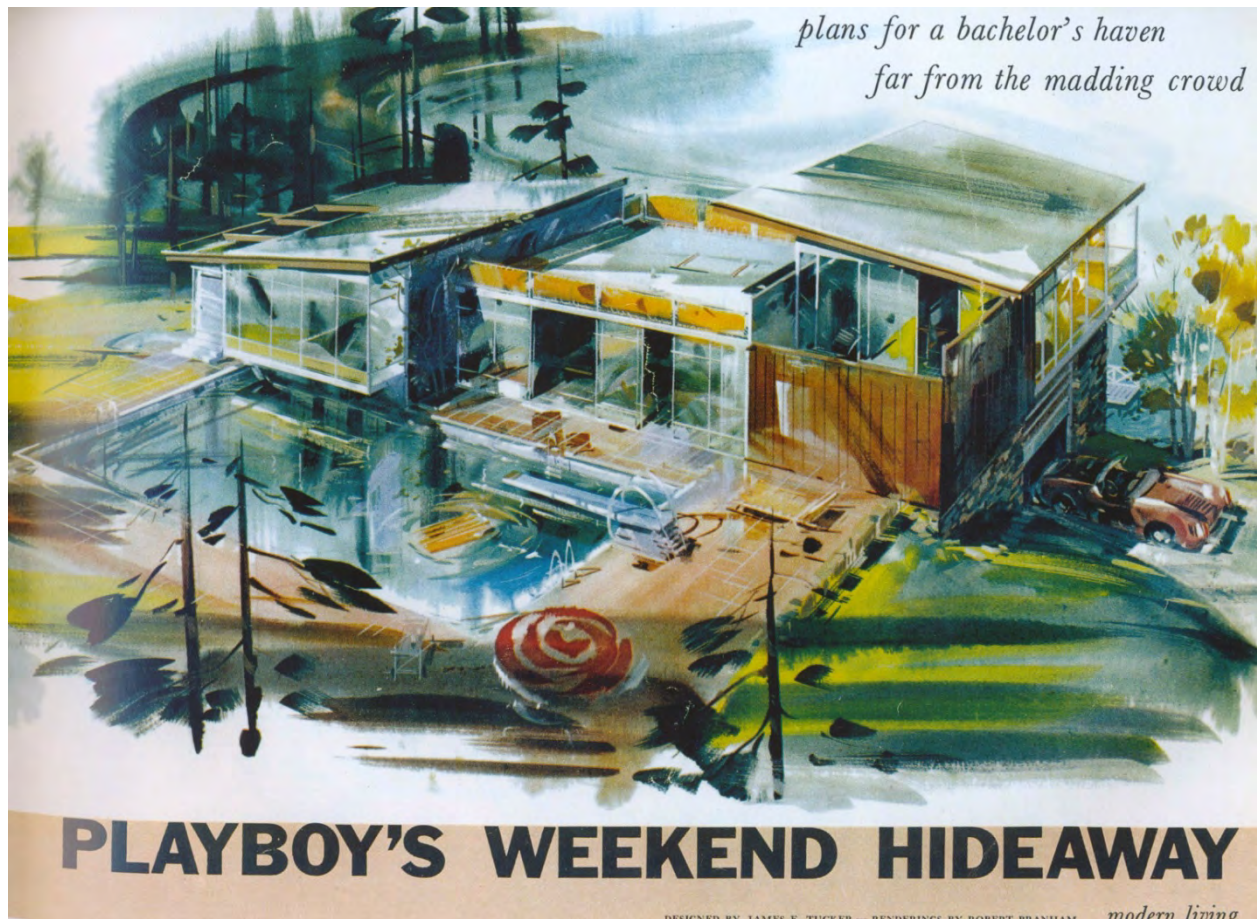


Figure 3

From: Elizabeth Armstrong, *The Birth of Cool: California Art, Design, and Culture at Midcentury*, (Orange County Museum of Art Prestel Publishing, 2007).

At the center of the floor plan, the living room offers guests a view of the luxurious, in ground pool. Complete with diving board, the pool functions as an outdoor extension of the living room where guests can be entertained and seduced while swimming around. Although a lake is nearby, the bachelor only sees it as adding aesthetic qualities to the surrounding area.<sup>42</sup> Similarly to the glass sliding panels, which allow guests to see into the house before going in, the clear, chlorinated water allows guests to see the bottom; a comforting factor when asked if they would like to take a dip in the pool. A round of drinks from the small, living room bar would also help convince a lady to change into her swimsuit, dive in, and find herself wrapped tightly in the arms of the handsome bachelor by the dim glow of the pool lights. Thus, in this bachelor pad it is the pool, rather than the seating arrangement, that breeds a certain intimacy in the living room.

An architect named Fred Lyman transformed this fantasy created and advertised by the editors of *Playboy* into a reality by designing his own weekend hideaway in Malibu. Photographs of his “Oceanside digs” were included in the Modern Living section of the May 1964 issue. Men looking at them could not only dream of having a place like this as their own, but realize that if Lyman could live the Playboy lifestyle so could they. Following the pattern of previous Modern Living section features, “A Playboy’s

<sup>42</sup> “Playboy’s Weekend Hideaway,” *Playboy*, April 1959, 49-53.

Pad: Airy Aerie” began with a description of the central living area. In the suburban home and bachelor pad, the living room functions as the nucleus. However, it controls quite different activities in each location. At Lyman’s pad, like at the Weekend Hideaway, the living room is a safe, indoor space that allows him to observe the effects of nature through glass walls. For example, the airtight and secure doors even transformed Malibu’s violent windstorms into “pleasurable pulses.”<sup>43</sup>

At both the imagined and real pad, bringing the outside (a traditionally masculine space) inside (a traditionally feminine space) made staying in the domestic sphere a more respectable choice for men. The architecture of the pad informed outsiders that the bachelor was still interested in enjoying the outdoors even while indoors; reducing the likelihood of someone accusing him of being queer. It also revealed that men had control over both spaces. No longer were they imprisoned by the domestic ideology that swept through the suburban neighborhood. They did not have to allow women to control the inside while they were outside. Instead, both were their personal domains strictly for pleasure; as emphasized by Lyman when explaining why he built this pad.<sup>44</sup>

Synthesizing and expanding on the features of previous illustrated fantasy pads, architect-designer R. Donald Jaye designed for *Playboy* “The Playboy Town House,” which appeared in the October 1964 issue. Distinguished from the post-Victorian brownstones that surround it, the converted Town House stood as an “ultra-urban island of individuality in a sea of look-alike multiple dwellings.”<sup>45</sup> In this case, the architecture and design of the space functions to separate the urban bachelor from the suburban organization men who all looked the same in their gray suits and replicated suburban homes. Due to the expense of the decor alone shown in the pads imagined by *Playboy*, few would be able to replicate their own pad after the shared images. This pushed men to work harder and begin spending on credit so that they would be able to live this exclusive lifestyle.

For those who were unable to simply charge all expenses to their card, pleasure could be found in dreaming about what life might be like in such a space. The design of the Town House made this task simple. Perhaps as a way to further acknowledge the seductive elements of the in ground pool, which were first employed by the *Playboy* bachelor at the Weekend Hideaway, Jaye placed one inside the Town House. Here in the center, the pool replaces the living room as the focus (see figure 4). Imagine the bachelor returning home with a lovely female companion after a night out in the bustling city. He offers her a drink and points across the pool to the kitchen at the far end of the Town House. Although the cutaway view reveals to the reader that there is a walkway across the pool, the bachelor has a perfect opportunity to tell his lady friend, who would undoubtedly be thrilled by the view in front of her, that it would be more fun to swim across instead. This is the sort of elaborate fantasy that could be conjured up simply by glancing at the illustrations and reading their accompanying descriptions.

With the Entertainment Wall being noticeably absent from not only the living room but the rest of the house, the bachelor most likely turned to the abstract art hanging on the walls when in need of striking up casual conversation. Just as Howard had been educated by someone at the “little out of the way shop in Mount Pilot” where he purchased his abstract paintings, the *Playboy* reader was educated by art critic Sidney Tillim about the “Fine Art of Acquiring Fine Art” in the January 1962 issue. If a bachelor could learn to tell the difference between a Pollock and a de Kooning they would surely be able to impress their date. As stated in the article, acquiring fine art is no longer for the elite only since the

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<sup>43</sup> “A Playboy’s Pad: Airy Aerie,” *Playboy*, May 1964, 71-75.

<sup>44</sup> “A Playboy’s Pad: Airy Aerie,” *Playboy*, May 1964, 71-75.

<sup>45</sup> “The Playboy Town House,” *Playboy*, October 1964, 84.

“golden age of connoisseurship has died out.”<sup>46</sup> However, having knowledge about the artwork hanging in their pad would signal to single ladies that the man they were with was cultured and had an appreciation for aesthetics.

Although the living room was no longer at the center of the floor plan, its importance was not displaced. Its new location on the second floor under the master bedroom revealed that it still functioned as the conduit to the bedroom. An open spiral staircase connected the two rooms together in a more direct way than the hallways in the Penthouse Apartment and the Weekend Hideaway (see figure 5). It is this design that completes the transformation of the feminine family room into a masculine den of seduction by making it be the bedroom, rather than the kitchen, that the living room is most directly connected to. Anyone peering into the floor to ceiling window wall from the apartments visible across the street would surely see the bachelor following closely behind his female companion as she willingly ascended the staircase.

Inside the bedroom, a round, rotating bed located in the center faces a glass wall providing a view of the guest bedroom across the way, the seating area outside of the study on the floor below, and perhaps most importantly: the stars through the skylight above (see figure 6). Like the window wall in the living room below, this glass wall entices the bachelor’s companion to step forward and look out at her surroundings from a different perspective. Looking straight down, both would see the pool that they may have swam in earlier. Most likely it was only there to aid in the art of seduction by allowing the woman to make the ultimate decision whether or not she would be spending the night in bed with the bachelor.

Surprised by the fact that the man was giving her an option, and not realizing that this was part of his trap, the woman would willingly lay down on the bed; at least this was the intended outcome. The bed could then be rotated to face the fire place for warmth. The drapes could be drawn with the touch of a button on the control panel on the headboard and a drink could be poured from the concealed bar.<sup>47</sup> Like the mini bar in the Entertainment Wall, this bar saved the bachelor from making a trip to the kitchen. Since it was down three levels and was not so easily accessed as a result of the buildings layout, the bachelor’s companion surely would have grown tired of waiting and in a sober moment might have lost interest in spending the night. It is important to note the continued use of alcohol by the bachelor and his guest in the bedroom. Even if the swinging single lifestyle was as natural and necessary as the Kinsey Report claimed, it was completely contrary to what people were taught during the time period. Thus, in many ways a bachelor and his guests needed assistance from a substance to reduce their tendency to restrain themselves from expressing their sexuality.

When weaving his web of seduction, a bachelor could rely on the environment he designed to do most of the work for him. However, when it came to entertaining multiple guests of both the same and opposite sex, he needed to acquire some tips on how to make the event a success. Although not in the same way, entertaining was as much of a responsibility for the bachelor as it was for the housewife. The bachelor needed to help foster togetherness among the singles living in the urban area so that they could find readily available sexual outlets in either the man or woman of their choosing. Also, it provided the host, as well as those on the guest list with an opportunity to mingle with some rather interesting and accomplished individuals.

At least this is what the syndicated television show *Playboy’s Penthouse* hosted by Hugh Hefner

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<sup>46</sup> Sidney Tillim, “The Fine Art of Acquiring Fine Art,” *Playboy*, January 1962, 60.

<sup>47</sup> “The Playboy Town House,” *Playboy*, October 1964, 89.



*Figure 4*

From: Midcenturyjo, "Playboy Town House" *Desire to Inspire* (blog), Friday, June 2007, <http://www.desiretoinspire.net/.../omg?currentPage=6>.



*Figure 5*

From: Midcenturyjo, "The Playboy Town House" *Desire to Inspire* (blog), Friday, June 2007, <http://www.desiretoinspire.net/.../omg?currentPage=6>.



*Figure 6*

*From: Midcenturyjo, "Playboy Town House" Desire to Inspire (blog), Friday, June 2007. <http://www.desiretoinspire.net/.../omg?currentPage=6>.*

suggested. The first episode aired on October 24, 1959 and comedian Lenny Bruce made an appearance as one of the guest stars.<sup>48</sup> At the opening of the show, the camera, acting as the eyes of a male guest (the viewer tuning in), follows a woman in a low cut dress swing her hips as she walks by in her high heels carrying what appears to be a martini in one hand and a highball in the other. Hefner then turns to face the “guest” who he greets by saying: “Hello there. I’m glad you could join us this evening.”<sup>49</sup> After Bruce is introduced, he and Hefner sit down together away from the other guests and in an area that creates a talk show environment. Here they casually converse about the show and Bruce’s comedy while other guests slowly begin to crowd around. Of course, this is a “TV fake party” as Bruce calls it; therefore the viewer would not necessarily attempt to simulate every aspect of the onscreen party. However, by watching Hefner’s body language and use of language, they could learn how to be as suave of a host as he was attempting to be.

Next, the *Playboy* reader needed to learn how to prepare food and drinks for his guests. As stated earlier, the kitchen in the suburban home was a feminine space. Married men spent virtually no time in the kitchen and as a result were quite inexperienced in cooking. Their wives were responsible for making meals for them and the children, as well as for guests when invited over. As a result, preparing hors d’oeuvres for an informal cocktail party, for example, was not regarded as masculine. *Playboy’s* food editor Thomas Mario helped to change this. The articles he wrote for *Playboy’s* food and wine section were compiled in 1972 to form the contents of *Playboy’s Gourmet* cookbook. Just as *Playboy* was a masculine alternative to picking up a copy of *Good Housekeeping* for tips on interior decorating, *Playboy’s Gourmet* was the masculine alternative to reading the *Good Housekeeping Party Book* for tips on entertaining. Mario promised the reader that *Playboy’s Gourmet* was “hearty and masculine from cover to cover, it banishes the curlicue carrot, the dainty delectables and soggy salads and brings back the lusty life!”<sup>50</sup> Recipes included The Hearty Ham, The Gourmet Gobbler and The Worthy Roast; all fit for kings as stated on the back cover. While this helped to confirm that cooking was a masculine activity, Mario may have placed too much emphasis on the masculinity of each recipe. A color page insert of roast beef with a knife stabbed in it does little to help the reader fantasize about having a nice dinner with a lady. Instead, it seems more likely that the extremely masculine chef will be dining alone both aggressively and sloppily.

*Playboy* was much more successful at making drink mixing appear as a sophisticated and leisurely activity. To ensure that a bachelor could tell an old fashioned apart from a highball as well as he could tell a Pollock apart from a de Kooning, several different drink and cocktail quizzes were printed in various issues of *Playboy*. In the “Cocktail Quiz,” author Joseph C. Stacey suggests that mixing is a “manly art of combining the perfect ingredients into that tasty symbol of Twentieth Century culture, the cocktail.”<sup>51</sup> It was important for drink mixing to be considered “manly” because, as stated earlier, drinks were crucial to creating a relaxed environment. Alcohol helped to lift inhibitions and drew party guests closer together. Thus, a bachelor would ensure that female guests, more so than male guests, were poured a drink so that as the night progressed, they would be more willing to both develop and give in to their sexual appetite.

Truly it was the after party for two that men looked forward to all evening. Entertaining was mainly to fulfill a personal need for a sexual outlet. A bachelor did take pride in knowing that he was a

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<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Armstrong, *The Birth of Cool: California Art, Design, and Culture at Midcentury*, (Orange County Museum of Art Prestel Publishing, 2007) 241.

<sup>49</sup> Youtube, “Lenny Bruce on Playboy’s Penthouse (Part 1)” Accessed October 30, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4oSB4-Mt9s>.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Mario, *Playboy’s Gourmet*, (Chicago: Playboy Press, 1971) 5.

<sup>51</sup> Joseph C. Stacey, “Cocktail Quiz,” *Playboy*, April 1955, 45.



great host and that guests did benefit from the night of frivolity. However, a bachelor spent the night slowly convincing one woman to stay behind after the others had left to go home. The May 1954 article "Playboy's Progress" provided the reader with instruction on how to end the night with his lady friend following him into the bedroom. It set the stage for the late night "scene" that would be performed by the bachelor and his lady friend in the fantasy pad Playboy's Penthouse. An illustration of the cutaway floor plan with foot prints crossing back and forth between the kitchen, living room, balcony were supplemented with a list of the twenty-four "steps" taken before reaching the final destination (step twenty-five): the bedroom. Although the scene begins with the bachelor and his lady friend returning to the pad "after an evening at the theatre," the steps that follow would be the same for any night that the bachelor found himself alone with a lady friend.

After putting romantic Glenn Miller records on the phonograph, the bachelor mixes cocktails with spiked olives; drink round one of six for the evening.<sup>52</sup> This step is followed by the lady friend returning from the kitchen munching a chicken leg. Perhaps she has the same "fit for a king" appetite in food as *Playboy's Gourmet* implies after all! Drink round three, which immediately follows round two, and the first passionate embrace on the couch are listed as a single step; revealing that alcohol will make females become more willing to give in to a bachelor's advances. After this, the bachelor reads aloud from the Kinsey Report *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* that "50% of females indulge in premarital intercourse" and pours round four.<sup>53</sup> By round six, the lady friend is staggering. However, she is still level headed enough to slap the bachelor in the face when he suggests "they adjourn to the bedroom."<sup>54</sup> To show his lady friend that he is now disinterested in her after being rejected, he feigns disinterest by talking about the stock market and the Yankees and wanders off toward the bedroom.<sup>55</sup> Acknowledging that the issue of sex is the only thing that is making the bachelor suddenly disinterested in her, the lady friend becomes frustrated and demands to know where it says in the Kinsey Report that she should be willing to have premarital sex. This combination of food, music, alcohol, passionate embraces, and statistics from the Kinsey Report followed by a sudden lack of interest does finally lure the lady friend into the bedroom; drawing the curtain on this scene of seduction that was displayed to anyone glancing through the bachelor's picture window.

Over five decades since its initial launching, *Playboy* continues to be in print and at the age of eighty-four Hugh Hefner continues to be an idol to those envious of his ability to spend all day in a silk robe with scantily clad young women on each arm. The Playboy lifestyle, however, seems to be adopted by most men today within the realm of fantasy. In neither urban nor suburban America has the number of bachelor pads simply been on a continuous rise since the 1960s. In fact, the term bachelor pad itself is decadal; it conjures up stereotyped images of the "swinging sixties," like those in the 1997 comedy *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*. Seeing the fluorescent, psychedelic colors and animal prints covering the walls and furnishings of Powers private jet, for example, and seeing him spinning around on the round rotating bed failing to impress the woman he is with, the idea of having a bachelor pad becomes a joke for men today.

While the bachelor pad may not be the space most men are looking to create for themselves, men still want an inside space to control. For most, the "man cave," rather than the bachelor pad, has become their masculine domain separate and safe from all things feminine. The man cave has become a popular real estate feature and websites, including theman-cavestore.com, supply men with all of the gadgets,

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<sup>52</sup> "Playboy's Progress," *Playboy*, May 1954, 22.

<sup>53</sup> "Playboy's Progress," *Playboy*, May 1954, 22.

<sup>54</sup> "Playboy's Progress," *Playboy*, May 1954, 23.

<sup>55</sup> "Playboy's Progress," *Playboy*, May 1954, 22.

furnishings, and decorative items they need to ensure that the space is “manly” enough for them to spend time in. Instead of abstract art and Knoll chairs, married men are purchasing neon beer signs, plush leather couches, and pool tables to furnish their space. What ultimately distinguishes the man cave from the bachelor pad is that it is for married men to entertain other men in. Women are not invited into this space; therefore it does not have a dual function as a den of seduction. According to a 2010 *HomeGoods* commercial, the man cave will cease to function as a masculine entertainment room as well though. Converted into a “mom cave,” the husband and his two friends are once again left without a place in the suburban home to call their own.<sup>56</sup>

Recently, 1960s bachelorhood has become glamorized by AMC’s Emmy and Golden Globe-winning television series *Mad Men*. Beginning the series as the Creative Director of the Sterling Cooper advertising firm (before forming his own), the protagonist Don Draper is considered by most men and women alike as the epitome of man. He is handsome, charming, wealthy, accomplished, and in the first season successful at both playing the role of husband and breadwinner while secretly having an affair in the city on the side. *Mad Men* frames suburban married life the same way Playboy did in the postwar era; as a trap that men desperately want out of once realizing that there is so much more to life and so many more women to meet in the urban area. Similarly to how the fantasy pads allowed men to imagine living the Playboy lifestyle, episodes of *Mad Men* allow men to imagine what life could be like if they were Don Draper. With the “womanization of America” once again becoming a threat according to the “mom cave” *HomeGoods* commercial, perhaps men will slowly begin to adopt the Don Draper lifestyle to escape from the trap of suburban married life and end each night like the Playboy bachelor, by closing the door to their bedroom after luring a female guest inside.

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<sup>56</sup> YouTube “Home Goods “Mom Cave” TV Commercial,” Accessed December 3, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTOKWfio7cc>.