

MEXICO CITY MARVEL

A STUNNING URBAN APARTMENT THAT WINS HEARTS—
AND MAJOR DESIGN ACCOLADES

Homeowners have long been enthusiastic about home automation's ability to simplify their lives. But for every eager early adopter there's usually an architect or designer worried about a complex home-automation system marring their beautiful work. So when we heard that a Control4®-equipped condominium in Mexico City had taken the grand prize in the AMDI (Asociacion Mexicana de Diseñadores de Interiores), Mexico's most prestigious design

competition, we knew that we had to feature it in *Home Smart Home*. "Last year, the prize went to a museum," says the condo's owner. "I still can't believe they're comparing my home to a museum!"

It may not be the size of a museum, but this unique home is certainly a work of art. With a sleek, modern profile, glass enclosures, expansive city views, and richly textured stone and wood walls, the owner and his wife have created an elegant, yet comfortable space that's made



The living room offers a sweeping view of Mexico City—with programmable blinds that keep the space cool during the day, *left*. Another view of the living and dining room, *above*.



PHOTOS COURTESY AMPLAUDIO



The owner, a Miami Dolphins fan, enjoys watching his favorite team on the 119-inch anamorphic screen in the home theater, while simultaneously catching two other games on smaller screens above the bar. Off-season, on any TV in the house, you'll likely catch him watching an episode of *Friends*.

for entertaining. And that's before their guests witness what's going on behind the scenes.

"It's a regular apartment in Mexico City, but it has more automation than a very big home," says the homeowner, as he shows us the wealth of Control4® creature comforts he's built into the 350-square-meter space. The key, he tells us, was finding an architect who shared his passion for home automation from the start, and was willing to work with him to conceal everything from

speakers and adjustable lighting to a home-entertainment center within its walls. The results are stunning: Almost everything in the home is automated in one way or another. But aside from a few cleverly-placed touch screens, the entire system is tucked away within ceilings, walls, and closets.

Our tour begins in the owner's pride and joy—his home theater—which boasts a 119-inch anamorphic retractable screen on which he projects a 2:35:1 aspect ratio similar to that of a movie theater. To add

to the fun, he's also installed two smaller retractable screens on top of his personal bar. A die-hard Miami Dolphins fan, he's able to spend his Sundays watching his favorite team on the big screen, while two other games play simultaneously on the smaller screens. After the final touchdown, one tap wirelessly retracts the screens, automatically adjusts the lighting and turns on the Rhapsody music system, setting the mood for a chat over drinks.

The family's viewing options

originate in a closet near the kitchen, where a hidden rack conceals a formidable entertainment arsenal. A video distributor wirelessly streams HD content from a DirectTV box, Apple TV, and a 400-disc Blu-Ray changer, with crystal-clear sound pouring from the eight audio zones' worth of JBL speakers concealed in his ceiling. "All the dimmers and switches are hidden in cabinets, and we only have keypads in the walls. All the speakers are in the ceiling and very discreet—you can't see them. You won't see any amps, DVD players, speakers, cable boxes...everything is hidden!" he tells us.

With HDTVs in the kitchen and in the master suite, the couple is never too far from their favorite entertainment. During the week, both enjoy watching movies or TV shows from the comfort of their bathroom tub, thanks to a television concealed within their bathroom mirror. The lady prefers "chick flicks," he tells us, while he's partial to *Friends* reruns (Ross is his favorite). The dining room remains off-limits, however, so the couple can enjoy quiet dinners together.

Energy efficiency is another highlight of this home, and the owner believes it was the defining factor in garnering the design prize. With integrated thermostats, Card Access sensors for the refrigerator and freezer, and e-gauges installed in the circuit board, the family can monitor every kilowatt of energy they expend and adjust their behavior accordingly. "If we're using the washer and dryer during peak hours, it will recommend better, non-peak hours to use it. It lets you know if you're spending too much on lighting or air conditioning. It gives you information so you can program

PHOTOS COURTESY AMPLAUDIO



The bathroom mirror conceals a television, perfect for catching up on a show or two while soaking in the tub, *top*. Integrated thermostats and card-access sensors for the fridge and freezer allow the owners to monitor and adjust their energy use, *bottom*.

your home and save energy." Best of all, their home is programmable from anywhere in the world, even while they're traveling. "We have

tablets in the wall, we have wireless tablets, we have iPads and iPhones, we can do it online, we can do it from my office, we can do it with a

A large, bright living room with floor-to-ceiling windows. Motorized shades are partially pulled down, allowing natural light to fill the space. The room features a light-colored sofa, two black armchairs, and a coffee table. A floor lamp stands near the windows.

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button in the wall. But the best way to do it is to ask your wife to do it," he jokes.

Home automation has also proven helpful for the couple as they enter a new phase of life. Earlier this year, the couple welcomed their first son. Though the baby is only a few months old, the owner has already made some clever adaptations to the home-automation system that help make new parenting a little easier. "We just got a new Control4® 7" in-wall panel with a camera, and put it in the baby's room," he tells us. The camera and microphone in the panel are connected to the entertainment system, allowing the couple to check in on the sleeping baby while they chat in the living room or catch up on their favorite shows. The new mother can also turn on soothing lullabies or Baby Einstein CDs over the speaker system when the baby settles down for a nap. As their son gets older, the couple's plan is to beef up the apartment's security features, which already include automatic locks on the main entry and service doors, to ensure their son stays safe.

Though the condo may be small by the standards of most automated homes, the Control4® system allows the owners to make the most of the space, and to create an environment that effortlessly flows from childrearing to couples' time to entertaining. With more and more families worldwide deciding to settle down and raise children in the city, the home may serve as a roadmap for a green, family-friendly urban space that doesn't sacrifice comfort. "I'm very glad the design jury loved my home," he tells us with a smile. "Because we love it, too." ■

PHOTOS COURTESY AMPLIAUDIO

AN AUTOMATED OASIS IN MEXICO CITY

In the upscale Samara Shops in Mexico City's trendy Santa Fe neighborhood, a window display featuring a kitschy 70's living room might seem somewhat out of place. But the shag carpeting and wood paneling provide the perfect setup for a big surprise: a 50" touch screen built into the window, projecting the Control4® Navigator menu, allows passers-by to control everything about the room, including turning the TV on and off, changing channels, opening and closing the blinds, and dimming the lights. Needless to say, it's a bit of an improvement on the home technology of the Carter years—and what's inside this unique store provides even more insight into home automation's exciting future.

The structure of the Control4® experience center is laid out

like a house, with a "game room" (complete with pool table) welcoming guests into the space, and providing information about key Control4® systems—lighting, audio, entertainment, security, and energy efficiency. Once visitors have absorbed some general information, a staff member will hand them an Apple® iPad and take them on a tour of the rest of the "home," allowing them to take the wheel and fiddle with any system they like in every room along the way. It's a fun, immersive experience that reveals how far home life has come in just the past few decades—and the amazing possibilities that automation can bring to the homes of today. If you're visiting Mexico City, be sure to stop by and see it for yourself!

