

In a prewar apartment on Manhattan's Park Avenue, designer Wesley Moon assembled a mix of neoclassical, Victorian, and midcentury pieces to complement the owners' photography collection. The custom sofa is upholstered in a Holly Hunt charcoal linen and embellished with a 1920s gold metal ribbon from Tinsel Trading Company. Photograph above sofa, Benrubi Gallery. **RIGHT:** A Regency armchair gets a cheeky update in purple alligator-embossed leather.



BEFORE & AFTER



## MAKE IT HUM



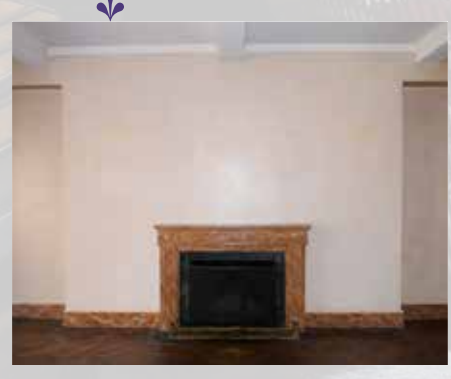
HOW ONE DESIGNER  
 PAIRED THOUGHTFUL  
 FINDS WITH FINE ART  
 UNTIL IT ALL SANG

1. How to—and how *not* to—make small rooms feel spacious
2. Foolproof ways to mix items from different eras
3. A strong case for painting, re-covering, and tinkering with vintage pieces

The clients longed for a peaceful home with “that Parisian collected-over-time feeling,” says Moon, who replaced the original mantel (inset) with an antique marble one from the Demolition Depot, a salvage shop. A vintage bench is upholstered in a Rosemary Hallgarten alpaca bouclé. Pearl-gray curtains match the wall color exactly: “I literally spent a day mixing grays and whites until I got the perfect match,” Moon says.



BEFORE



## Isn't this before-and-after story as much about you as it is about the apartment?

**WESLEY MOON:** The whole project was like a master class for me. I started it just one year after I founded my design firm, and I ended up spending nearly five years on it. The clients weren't in a rush. The pieces had to matter. The wife especially wanted to love them—and what's nice is she wanted me to love them, too.

**CELIA BARBOUR:** What important lessons did you learn along the way?

The wife has been collecting photography for a long time. She has a collector's eye and ability to edit. By working with her, I learned to hone those skills. And my previous projects had lower budgets, so this one pushed me to find new sources. **Your career's "bones" were already in place. What about the apartment's?**

It was in "estate" condition: trying to be grand but very dated. All of the moldings were faux marble in an unfortunate

shade of rust. Some rooms looked as if they hadn't been entered since the 1940s. There were multiple tiny bedrooms with miniature closets and window-unit air conditioners, that kind of thing.

**How did you go about updating it?**

I have an architecture background, so I know good design begins with getting the layout and proportions right—and also that tearing down walls does not make an apartment feel bigger! Instead, we connected rooms into suites. We also widened doorways and made them taller throughout the apartment to create a



better sense of flow. It was a joint effort with architectural firm Kinlin Rutherford, which oversaw the renovation.

**I can tell by the furniture that you found plenty of spots to put your fingerprint, too.**

No matter the budget, it's about finding ways to customize. There's hardly a piece that I don't try to figure out a way to make better. For instance, the Eames lounge chair in the library is an iconic design, but I wasn't about to leave it alone. We upholstered it in navy boiled wool instead of the traditional leather. When we bought the white bench in the living room, the metal was shiny brass and the box cushion looked like a Jacuzzi cover. I added a patina to darken the legs, then had the cushion covered in a tufted alpaca bouclé so it's like a cloud. And the Edwardian armchairs are now upholstered in purple gator-embossed leather. Sometimes a piece needs a little attitude.

**Speaking of attitude, that quilted one-arm sofa has it in spades.**

That piece anchors a sitting area at the far end of the entry hall. It's the first thing you see when you enter the front door. But it's also part of the living room, so it needs to both stand alone and interact with the rest of the room.

The one-arm sofa suggests that the area bookends a much larger composition. **From Edwardian to Eames, what's the vision that ties it all together?**

The clients wanted a peaceful retreat, so our motto became "Make it hum"—there are no solo performances, not even the photographs. Every decorative or classically "feminine" piece is balanced by something more masculine or edgy. Clean lines are paired with luxurious flourishes, like the vintage gold metal ribbon that trims the linen sofas.

**Was striking the right balance ever tricky?** The wife loves beautiful, decorative things, and their previous apartment was all Victorian and Edwardian. But she doesn't like midcentury... **...the most obvious counterpoint to those decorative Victorian pieces!**

Exactly. So when I found the coffee table, she wouldn't even consider it. I said, "But it's French. It's just what the room needs!" I ended up fooling her into looking at it by bringing her to see another piece in that gallery. Now that table is

the one thing she never wants to change. **There's actually quite a lot of midcentury in this apartment.**

Yes, but you have to look for it! If I'm going to use midcentury, it needs to be special, one-of-a-kind.

**Both you and the clients pushed one another. How did that trust develop?**

The wife was originally considering several big-name designers, and she heard about me by chance from someone she met one day on a crosstown bus. Although she knew I was just starting out, she asked me to present a proposal—and I completely bombed. I was so new and so nervous, I threw everything and the kitchen sink at it. She called me up and said, "Thank you very much, but you just don't get it." And then about a month later, she called me back and said, "I haven't found anyone I connect with like I do with you. Would you like a second chance?"

**It sounds like a John Hughes movie! What did you say?**

I said, "Yes, I would!"

**ABOVE:** The client wanted to be "surrounded by books" in the library, so Moon breathed life into the dated interior (inset) with a built-in niche that allows books to be shelved on either side. The Eames chair is covered in a navy boiled wool, and the custom sofa is in a wool tartan by Holland & Sherry. Carpet, Stark. **OPPOSITE:** The custom rug's border "has a sisal-y crunch" that makes it feel more casual, and the custom one-arm sofa is in a Holland & Sherry quilted wool.



**ABOVE:** Dangling over a 1940s French table found at a Paris flea market, a trio of 1930s French Baguès lanterns sets a beguiling mood. The vintage cupped-hand sconces and lacquered sideboard also hail from France. The Tommi Parzinger dining chairs are covered in a Fortuny fabric. **BELOW:** Designer Wesley Moon.



**ABOVE:** Moon covered a set of Italian shield-back chairs in a glazed linen by Ralph Lauren Home; the antique secretary was updated with a white leather writing surface. **BELOW:** In the breakfast nook, Lucite tulip chairs cluster around a Corian-topped table. The banquette's outdoor velvet by Perennials is "as durable as can be." Chandelier, FontanaArte.



In a former bedroom (inset), the dressing room is now a sea of dreamy blues, from the curtains in a Holland & Sherry silk satin to the Manuel Canovas toile on the John Saladino daybed. Golden accents—a Lucite chain-link sconce, gilt Gustavian stools, velvet bolsters—brighten the sound-insulated space, which doubles as a yoga retreat. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES

