



THE TALENT

WESLEY MOON CREATES HOMES WITH ACCESSIBLE ELEGANCE

by Jorge S. Arango | March 27, 2017

The designer attributes his career to a series of lucky breaks, but his interiors prove that talent and an eye for detail are the secrets to his success.



Wesley Moon worked at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and several other firms before an acquaintance asked him to design her townhouse, which prompted him to start his own firm (portrait by Thomas Loof). Top: Moon designed the [Jean Royère](#)-inspired sofa at the left of this Upper East Side living room. A pair of [Osvaldo Borsoini](#) swivel chairs from the 1950s face the [Paul Kingma](#) stone-top coffee table from [Walter Design](#) (photo by Peter Murdock).

In 1987, when Georgia-born and -bred Wesley Moon was 10 years old, he and his mother were in a car accident. The injuries that his mother, Jan Yancey, sustained ended her career as a clog-dancing teacher, as well as a performer on the television show *Hee Haw*, at the Grand Ole Opry and other venues. And, although Moon already showed an affinity for design — “My first toys were Legos, and my first houses were for Smurfs,” he jokes — the event irrevocably set the course of his own career.

After the accident, his mother learned faux finishing, eventually parlaying the skill into an interior decorating business known for bold statements and big flower arrangements. (His father, Ted Moon, has long owned a sheet metal company.) “I loved working with her and playing with the fabric swatches and paint finishes,” recalls Moon. “I learned from her to be pretty fearless and commit to my decisions.” Moon enrolled in the architecture program at Georgia Tech for two years, then transferred to American InterContinental University Atlanta, where he earned a bachelor of fine arts in interior design in 2000.

A set of architectural renderings Moon executed as a sophomore in high school that hang behind his desk at his small office on Chrystie Street, in Lower Manhattan, is evidence of how thoroughly he absorbed his mother’s fearlessness. They depict an imagined 60,000-square-foot manse that mixes architectural styles and are peppered with notes like “Marble columns are nine feet tall with gold angels on top.”

To earn money while at school, Moon ran his own faux-finishing business in his sophomore and junior years and, as a senior, worked for Atlanta-based designer Teri Duffy. That year, on a study project in New York, Moon toured the offices of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, where one of the heads of the interiors department invited him to come work at the storied firm after graduation. "Teri was very supportive and encouraged me to follow my dream of moving to New York," he recalls. "It sounded really swanky to work in the world's largest architectural firm. But the reality of being one auto-CAD operator of fifty-two and one employee of four hundred wasn't glamorous."

Still, Moon excelled. He designed a café for Goldman Sachs that he was set to present to company executives on September 11, 2001. But in the wake of that day's terrorist attacks, Goldman Sachs and SOM, like many companies, scaled back. Moon left SOM and put in time at, among other firms, Sean Johnson, Thom Filicia and Martha Stewart, where he worked on a series of branded residential developments around the country. After a friend of a friend saw one of Moon's freelance projects, she asked him to design her New York townhouse, and he felt confident enough to strike out on his own in 2008.

Since then, his work has been featured in, among others, *Architectural Digest*, *Elle Décor*, *House Beautiful* and *New York*. (See Moon's [before-and-after transformations](#) on The Study.) Currently, he is juggling 13 projects, more than half of which he deems "major," including a Greenwich Village triplex and sprawling houses in Rye, New York; and Greenwich, Connecticut.



"The clients wanted a dining room that can accommodate large dinner parties but is also intimate enough for the two of them to have dinner alone," Moon says of this Upper East Side space. He designed a pair of tables that they can join to create one large piece seating up to 16 people. The 1980s [Mastercraft](#) cabinet is from [Telisman](#). Photo by Peter Murdock



A mobile sculpture by Helena Starcevic hangs over a ca. 1815 ebonized [Biedermeier](#) chaise longue from [Ritter Antik](#) in this penthouse on Manhattan's Upper West Side. An Italian modernist club chair by [Augusto Bozzi](#) from [Van den Akker](#) is paired with a vintage coiled-spring gilt-iron table from [Duel](#). The Berovio e Toso floor lamp is from [Century Design, Ltd](#). Photo by William Weldron

find a way to neutralize it. Everything has to play nicely together.

HOME TOWN

Buford, Georgia

HOME BASE

New York, New York

FIRST BIG BREAK

I've had so many lucky breaks, chance meetings, mother's prayers and happy coincidences along the way that have culminated in my current career. But the genesis and ultimate big break for me was getting the job at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill right out of college. That allowed me to move to New York City, and I made my best friends there, who I am still the closest to sixteen years later. It's through one of those friends that I met my first client when I went out on my own.

THE LOOK

I mix periods but in a way that doesn't look like it's trying too hard. I care about making the house lived in, never too precious. I call it accessible elegance. I don't like when there's one piece in a room screaming at you. I like a room to hum, no solo performances. If something is dramatic, I



The living room of this Park Avenue apartment features sofas designed by Moon and produced by Anthony Lawrence Belfair. The 1960s French coffee table is from [Van den Akker](#), and the Warren Platner chair from [Modern Drama](#) was reupholstered in a [Christian Lacroix](#) fabric. A Matthew Pillsbury photograph hangs on the wall next to a framed antique [French Aubusson tapestry](#). Photo by William Waldron



The lyrics to "What a Wonderful World" are written in gold leaf on the wall of the master bedroom. The custom bed is by Anthony Lawrence Belfair, and the throw is by Frette. The vintage Dunbar tête-à-tête is reupholstered in an embroidered silk velvet [Holland & Sherry](#). The rock-crystal lamp is from [Carlos de la Puente Antiques](#). Photo by William Waldron



"Here, I took a plain white box and added architecture by simply applying strips of wood that give the illusion of board and batten," Moon says of his Fire Island living room. The vintage [Dunbar](#) sofa is covered in a lacquered linen from Cowtan & Tout, and the chair is vintage [Milo Baughman](#) recovered in a pink wool bouclé from Knoll. The area rug is by [Madeline Weinrib](#), and the drapery fabric is from [Marimekko](#). Photo by Peter Murdock



Hanging over the sofa in this Upper West Side penthouse is a vintage Turkish coat that Moon had mounted on a carved wooden bar from Thailand and framed in a Plexiglas. He designed the black lacquered side tables to house the electronic equipment. The [James Mont](#) sofa is from [Gustavo Olivieri](#), and the [LeVerne](#) Romanesque coffee table is from [Adam Edelsberg](#). Photo by William Waldron

EARLY INFLUENCES

[Jean-Michel Frank](#), Paul Dupré-Lafon, [Albert Hadley](#). I'm also loving [Jay Spectre](#) now, especially his work in the late 1960s. It's mostly about the forms.

CURRENT PLAYLIST

I'm on a constant rotation between Stevie Nicks, Hed Kandi and Dolly Parton on Spotify.

FAVORITE ARTISTS

[Ross Bleckner](#) and [Maria Berrio](#)

DESIGNERS YOU MOST ADMIRE

[Pierre Yovanovitch](#) — none of my projects look like his, but he's the first designer whose work I look to for inspiration. His vibe really speaks to me, and his details are impeccable. Details are everything to me. Also [Jean Louis Deniot](#), because he's so French.

FAVORITE DRINK

Vieux Carré



The terrace of the Upper West Side penthouse, designed with Aeron McIntire, of Gunn Landscape Architecture, features a built-in bench upholstered in a Sunbrella fabric with a Quadrille print. A zinc-top table and klismos chairs complete the ensemble. Photo by William Weldron



In the master bedroom of this Manhattan apartment, the homeowner's antique clock hangs above a 1950s Italian side chair. The drapery fabric is from [Holland & Sherry](#). Photo by William Weldron

FAVORITE WATERING HOLE

Hotel bars in general. In New York, it's The Baccarat, The Carlyle and The Mark.

GO-TO PLACE

Le Bilboquet, on 60th Street — a perennially happening kind of French place

ON THE NIGHTSTAND

Queen of the Night, by Alexander Chee. It's about an opera singer in Paris with a dark secret past. Someone hands her a libretto that is the story of her life, so she has to try to figure out who knows her secret.

FAVORITE GETAWAY

My own place in the Pines, on Fire Island, which I share with my husband, Salvatore Malleo. The only place I really shut down is on a beach.

FILED UNDER

Albert Hadley, Fire Island's The Pines, Georgie, Interior Design, Interior Designer, Jay Spectre, Jean-Michel Frank, Jorge S. Arengo, Marie Berrio, Martha Stewart, New York, Owings & Merrill, Paul Dupré-Lafon, Ross Bleckner, Salvatore Malleo, Sean Johnson, Skidmore, Teri Duffy, Thom Filicia, Van Den Akker, Wesley Moon