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A Colorful, Modern Makeover for a Drab Postwar Apartment

By Wendy Goodman



"We created the illusion of wood paneling by applying picture-frame molding on the living-room walls," says Wesley Moon. Photo: Marco Ricca

Interior designer Wesley Moon transformed a nondescript white box of a postwar apartment into a bright, modernist oasis for a young couple and their new baby.

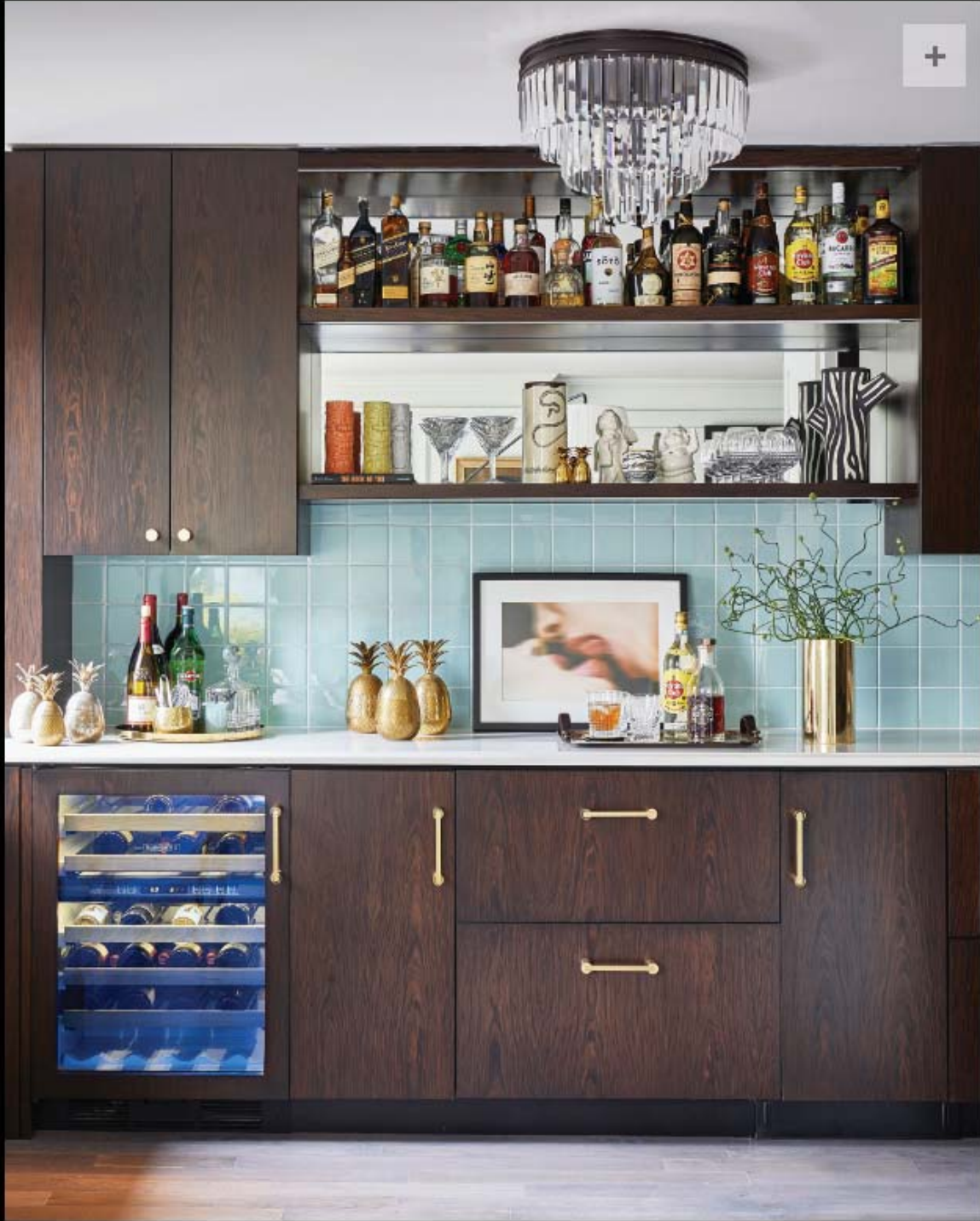


A YOUNG FAMILY'S MODERNIST MANHATTAN OASIS

When they decided they wanted to have a baby, Rachel Lamel and Constantine Giavos knew they'd have to expand their one-bedroom apartment. Their solution: buy the studio apartment next door and enlist interior designer Wesley Moon for an impactful, baby-friendly redesign combining both apartments. Here, Moon combined two walk-in closets, both off the living room, to create a music studio for Giavos. He also worked with NY Landmark Construction to make the architectural changes. The Eames Management chair is vintage.



“The apartment was a plain white box in a postwar building, so, as usual, I thought it most important to add architectural interest and make the space feel more substantial,” Moon says. “We created the illusion of wood paneling by applying picture-frame molding on the living-room walls” — seen here — “and then lacquering everything in Farrow & Ball’s Pale Powder.” The sofa was custom made by Ferrell Mittman and upholstered in curry velvet fabric from Stark. The carpet is a vintage kilim from Marc Phillips. The wood-block print over the sofa is by Giavos’s father’s cousin, Christos Tsiatsos, and wouldn’t have fit in the elevator had it not been framed in the apartment. The Murano-glass lamps are from the 1940s.



The bar area extends off the kitchen, and the blue-tile backsplash and wood cabinets were inspired by Lamel and Giavos's favorite New York restaurant, ZZ's Clam Bar. The stacked drawers to the left are a beverage fridge, and to the right of that is an icemaker.



In the dining area, the Knoll chairs are from Design Within Reach and upholstered in soft pink felt. The concrete ceiling — seen here with a thin layer of plaster — prevented Moon from hanging a light fixture, so he used the Prouvé wall sconce, which extends over the 1980s glass-and-brass table, and added a ruffle lampshade to diffuse the light. The portraits on the wall are by Vladimir Tretchikoff, from the 1950s.



“Rachel and Constantine were obsessed with Martinique wallpaper — the famed pattern from the Beverly Hills Hotel, Indochine, and The Golden Girls,” Moon says. “They wanted to do one wall behind the bed, but I’m not a fan of accent walls, so I convinced them it was an all-or-nothing situation.” Moon covered the headboard, boxspring, and chair in coordinating fabric, and even used the fabric for the drapes.



“We stressed to Wesley that we didn’t want this to feel like a typical New York apartment,” Giavos says. “Wes did a great job of taking the ideas and seeing them through and just making them 100 times better than Rachel and I ever could’ve imagined.” The choice of black and white tiles in the master bath balances the colorful bedroom and gives the space a modern Deco vibe.



The studio apartment was purchased three years ago. Here, in 6-month-old Ruby's bedroom, which is adjacent to the master bedroom, the crib, bedding, and stuffed-animal heads are all from Serena & Lily, and the carpet is from West Elm.



Ruby's room sports an elephant-motif wood-carved dresser from Pottery Barn Kids and a very grown-up custom-made neon sign. Moon added the neon sign at Lamel and Giavos's request because, Moon says, the couple didn't want the room to become "too juvenile."



The guest bath features a floating vanity that adds a bit of punch to the classic wall tiles in soft green, pink, and black. Moon says the palette is “a nod to the couple’s 1950s art collection.”



The hallway was given the same treatment as the living room: A high-gloss paint covers the walls, which are finished with added picture-frame molding used as wood trim. The print at the end of the hall is by the late artist and poet René Ricard, and the vintage brass lotus light fixture creates a sculptural shadow on the ceiling. “Wesley really brought all our inspirations to life,” Lamel says of the results.