

# INTERIOR DESIGN<sup>®</sup>

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# crosslines

## home sweet home



The Greenwich Village apartment of Gregory Dufner and Daniel Heighes Wismer is a miniature marvel of space planning and distilled style

GREGORY DUFNER AND DANIEL HEIGHES Wismer know all about living large. The Dufner Heighes principals have spent the better part of eight years designing quietly luxurious residences from coast to coast. So imagine the scenario when the architects bought themselves a 500-square-foot studio in Greenwich Village.

Their renovation was guided by two nonnegotiable points. The bed could not be in the center of the space. And the furnishings and finishes would have to meet the pair's standards for sumptuousness, even though the budget would be a fraction of the usual.

Now building a 14,000-square-foot house outside Seattle, Dufner and Wismer describe what it's like to be their own clients—and tell us why they broke down and got a Viking.

*From top: The principals of Dufner Heighes. A refurbished Salvation Army chair and a wool-covered vintage sofa mixed with prototypes for a lacquered maple table and black-walnut storage boxes.*

**What was it about this apartment that clinched it for you?**

**DHW:** Even though there was originally a big walk-in closet where we wanted to put the bed, we realized that the space could

work if we removed the closet and gave that square footage back to the main room, then used two storage units to create separate sleeping and living areas.

**GD:** Then we thought, *What if the bed was built-in, like on a ship?*

That way, the bedroom's circulation space could overlap with the kitchen's, which would make both of them seem larger. The storage unit that separates the two areas is double-sided. One half holds clothes, and the other is the pantry.

**Did you use any ideas from your larger projects?**

**DHW:** Yes. We'd used the Douglas fir end-block flooring, in a different finish, for a loft. Cabinetry, also Douglas fir, is the same as in a Vermont house that we did. We designed the coffee table for a client and the storage boxes for a gallery—ours are the prototypes.

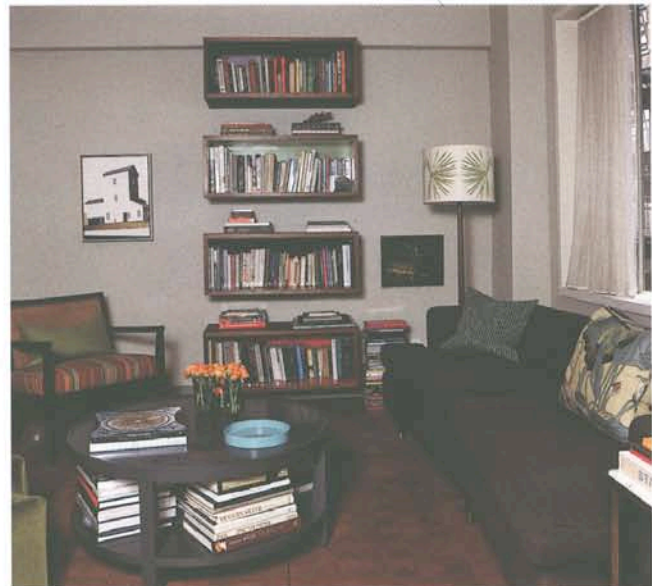
**GD:** But we also got to experiment with furniture and color.

**DHW:** That's true. Our clients tend to be afraid of vintage, of things that aren't in mint condition. We think it's fun to fix up pieces or live with the scratches and dings—the aura of their previous life. We paid \$5 at the Salvation Army for our black-lacquered armchair. Although we did spend \$500 refinishing, re-caning, and reupholstering it.

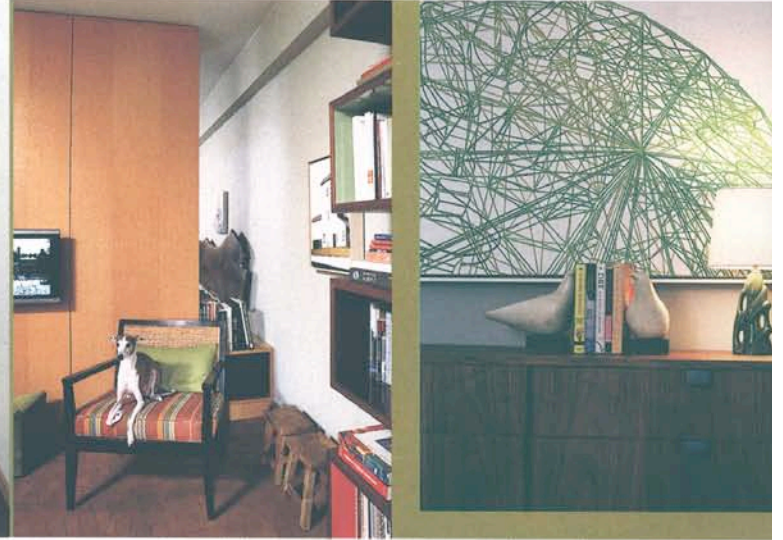
**GD:** Vintage pieces lend themselves well to an apartment of this scale. But we'd never upholster in some mid-century fabric, like nubby bouclé. For our sofa, we went with cashmere-felted wool. We make pieces more upscale and contemporary, be it by fabric or by stain.

**How did the process here compare to client projects?**

**DHW:** We always present to each







other before we present to our client, going back and forth until we agree. Our process at home was similar. We even put together palette boxes with materials, fabrics, and paint colors. Obviously, we skipped the presentation step.

**GD:** If anything, I was worried about not having the feedback. Although that criticism is sometimes frustrating, it makes your ideas evolve.

**Was it difficult to maintain your aesthetic on a budget?**

**DHW:** It was an excellent opportunity to practice what we preach—sometimes, you have to spend the money. So we bought a Viking range. It was a hard step to take, but it was worth it.

**GD:** Since everything here is on a much smaller scale, we could actually afford materials we use on larger projects. Like the glass mosaic tiles for the bathroom,

which is about 25 square feet rather than 200.

**What about the kitchen?**

**DHW:** Originally, there was a full-size refrigerator and no counter space. We needed more work surface, so we went with two under-counter refrigerators, which a lot of our clients would not want to do—or need to do. For us, though, it totally made the kitchen. →



*Clockwise from top left: Mira Nakashima's black-walnut headboard and an oil on panel by Ryan McGuinness. Moby, the family Italian greyhound, enjoying the Salvation Army chair's cotton upholstery. A vintage walnut bureau with an oil on canvas by William Steiger. The 9-foot-tall Douglas fir unit that's both clothes closet and pantry.*



**Run into any snafus?**

**GD:** Those glass mosaics on the bathroom floor were initially installed misaligned. The second time, they came loose. The third installer finally got it right.

**What have you learned from this project?**

**GD:** That things are going to be done wrong, and you have to let it go. That it's hard to be patient. We used to tell our clients that all the time. Now we really understand. —Julie Taraska

*From top: Mira Nakashima chairs, an Eero Saarinen table, and cotton curtains. The kitchen's Corian counters.*



JOHN ELLIS