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# ARTFUL LAIRS

# Movin' On Up

With the help of design firm Dufner Heighes, a young family relocates to brand-new digs in the same East Village building

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN ELLIS

**Casual Cool**  
Throw pillows from the Future Perfect line B&B Italia's Michel sofa in the living room. The mirror, pendant, and armchair, upholstered in Donghia's Covet in Moss, are vintage. See Resources.





**I**

t began innocently enough. Barnaby Harris paid a visit to friends in the Lower East Side building where he worked one day, excited to tell them about the apartment that he and his wife, Suzie Kondi, had just bought in the East Village. He also wanted to ask for some advice. Those friends, decorators Gregory Dufner and Daniel Heighes Wismer, had previously helped him design his office, so a level of familiarity and trust had already been established. "Barnaby told us that the apartment hadn't been touched in 50 years, and that it just needed to be cleaned up and repainted," recalls Dufner. "He had a contractor lined up to do the work, which included adding a new floor and taking down a wall, and just needed a survey and drawings."

Simple enough—at first. Like Harris and Kondi, Dufner and Heighes Wismer were seduced by the space, not to mention the building—a 1928 Art Deco gem with a marble lobby, complete with a fireplace, that looks more Upper East Side than East Village. At 1,200 square feet, the two-bedroom, one-bath apartment had windows galore with unobstructed views facing north and west, and it was located in a line that Harris, who had lived in the building since 2002, had long had his eye on. But except for minor repairs, it truly hadn't been touched in half a century, so suddenly the notion of "putting in a new floor" evolved into a total gut reno. "Did you know they used to fill floor cavities with ash?" says Dufner, recalling just one of the random surprises that awaited



**Modern Family** Barnaby Harris, Suzie Kondi, their daughter, Stevie, and the family's Miniature Labradoodle hang out in the dining room (ABOVE), with Bruce Bierman artwork as a backdrop. An armchair and ottoman, covered in

Elmotique leather from Elmo, is situated in a corner of the living room (OPPOSITE). Vintage signs from old television sets are illuminated on the custom floor-to-ceiling bookcase. The library lights are from Modulightor. See [Resources](#).

**A Colorful Meal**  
The dining room (THIS PAGE) features a vintage pine table and Marcel Breuer's B40 chairs with blue canvas seats and nickel frames. The matte white lacquer cabinetry, stainless-steel island, and faucet in the adjacent kitchen (OPPOSITE) are by Bulthaup. The wall ovens are by Gaggenau. See Resources.



**“The romantic idea of simply whitewashing existing moldings and interior prewar details just wasn’t realistic”**



them during the overhaul. “It was crazy. But we knew we could turn the place into something quite nice.”  
As the work went on, Harris and Kondi continued to live just two floors below with their then two-year-old daughter, Stevie, and Miniature Labradoodle. Their mandate was to “keep or re-create as much of the original detail as possible, while developing a more contemporary, free-flowing space,” Kondi says, adding that “it wasn’t the plan that turned out differently; it’s the scale that did. At one point our contractor compared it to the movie *The Money Pit*, which was not comforting! Although I don’t think it was quite that bad.”

“The romantic idea of simply whitewashing existing moldings and interior prewar details, refinishing the floor, and installing modern furniture just wasn’t realistic, since we were taking down walls, replacing the floor, rethinking the master bathroom, adding a powder room, and resolving some awkward spaces,” explains Dufner. It helped that the clients, who design a line of athleisure clothing called *It’s a Sickness*, and their decorators share similar sensibilities in taste and style. (Harris famously designed a T-shirt with the phrase “Fuck Frank Gehry” on it, landing him a write-up in *The New Yorker*; oddly enough, Gehry’s daughter is moving into the penthouse

**Wit And Whimsy**

A vintage sign hangs in the foyer (THIS PAGE), with Stevie's bedroom (OPPOSITE) just beyond. The Sparrow bed frame is from Oeuf and the bedding is from Restoration Hardware; children's play costumes hang on a Magic Cabin clothing rack. The floral wall covering is by Nathalie Lété. See Resources.



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**On A Scroll**

A hand-painted mural in the master bedroom (ABOVE) plays off a Piet Hein Eek quilt and a B&B Italia bed; the draperies are a Kravet silk. The clawfoot tub and fixtures in the master bath (TOP RIGHT) are from Waterworks. The powder room (NEAR RIGHT) features Remains Lighting brass sconces and a de Gournay wall covering. See *Resources*.

unit just one floor above.) Harris and Kondi planned on bringing much of their existing furniture to the new place, and Kondi, who routinely dog-ears magazine pages for inspiration, was active in sourcing new pieces. But the one thing the couple—both renovation novices—had not accounted for was lead times. “I thought 30 weeks for the new floor was a random number, and that it would probably come in at 20,” Harris recounts. “But it’s not random, it’s real.”

Still, the project was completed within nine months, despite

the waiting time, changes that added to the waiting time, a hurricane named Sandy, and European suppliers who closed for vacation during August. Kondi got the sparkling Bulthaup kitchen she had hoped for, which she describes as “dreamy and smart.” The new floor looks seamless, and it’s virtually impossible to tell that the elaborate moldings and architectural details have been completely refabricated. Perhaps most important is that the couple “survived the experience with our relationship intact,” Harris says. “And I got the TV I wanted.” ✨