

ONE-OF-A-KIND WONDER

A local designer transforms three apartments into one custom condo.

BY NICOLE KIEFERT | PHOTOS BY DOUG EDMUNDS

When James and Susee Wiechmann wanted to downsize from their stunning three-story home on the East Side, they turned to longtime friend Andrea Farr of Farr Interiors to help turn three apartment units into one beautiful, bold condo.

Farr, who has experience in both residential and commercial projects from here in Milwaukee to North Carolina, Las Vegas, Beverly Hills and beyond, eagerly accepted the challenge, drawing up layouts and dreaming of mediums while working closely with the homeowners to bring their visions to life.

Though she enjoyed the freedom and creativity she was afforded on the complex project, Farr says there were definite hurdles in combining three units into a single home, including reconfiguring electrical elements once walls were torn down.

"That was probably the biggest challenge, just getting everything located where it needed to be," she explains. "Dealing with things that were in the walls that were in spots where we didn't want things."

Homeowner Susee says that while she knew what she wanted of the new space, she leaned on Andrea to bring the design and materials together, and trusted her every step of the way.

"It was wonderful [working with her] because Andrea really knows how to take what you like and want and she makes it happen," Susee enthuses. "She's like a little magician. She just pulls it all together."

Though their former home was spacious, Susee explains that the kitchen was separated from the entire house, causing a crowded entertaining space when everyone gathered in the kitchen to socialize with their host. Because of that, a primary priority for the Wiechmanns was an open concept kitchen, dining and living room area to make entertaining easier and less crowded.

"... Of course everybody always wants to be in the kitchen, and when you're trying to cook," Susee notes. "... Now there's enough room for people to be behind where I am and it's not so crowded. I'm not always yelling at people, 'Could you please move so I can open the oven door?'"

To make the joint gathering spaces feel even cozier, Andrea kept Susee's preferred color choice of black, white and gold tones, creating a bold and artful look while maintaining a cozy and welcoming environment.

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Working with the homeowners' favorite color combination of black, white and gold, interior designer Andrea Farr used a tall porcelain slab in different stone colors and patterns for the TV unit, encasing the entertainment system with Jonathan Adler tusks perched on acrylic shelves for a subtly artful addition.





“She wanted a strong use of black and she didn’t want me to use grays. She wanted it to be warm [with] a mix of textures [and a] contemporary [feel],” Farr explains. “We ended up doing it a little bit more transitional than she originally thought. I wanted to be more timeless, so I brought in the contemporary but I tried to keep it very warm. ... [Susee] likes change a lot so she loves to change things around.”

“I just love the color combination,” Susee adds of the color choices. “I’ve always liked yellow and black and white as clothing too. It’s just one of those color combinations that I like living with. It’s about as close to what I think most people would consider neutral.”

To bring in Susee’s favorite palette, Farr incorporated a mix of wallpapers, fabrics and patterns with blacks and golds for a warm and modern feel. With Susee’s passion for art and for frequent redecorating, Farr used a Phillip Jefferies neutral straw grass cloth wall covering over a black wall covering to hide nail holes from hanging art and make it easier to swap out Susee’s favorite pieces, most

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Top: Farr won the Coverings CID Award last year for her stunning and creative use of tile and stonework, including the Italian porcelain infinity-edge countertop of the island and the mother of pearl tile on the underside.

Right: A vast majority of the furniture and fixtures in this transformed condo were custom created specifically for this home, like the dining room chairs surrounding the formal dining table. The home features several touches by Kelly Wearstler, including the gold wallpaper and the chandelier above the table, adding an elegant feel and giving a nod to Susee’s love for gold.



of which are sourced from both local and Wisconsin-based artists and art galleries.

The condo is art in and of itself, taking home the grand prize at the Coverings CID Awards 2018 for Farr's use of tile, large format porcelain slab and stone throughout the home, as well as her unique and creative designs with the materials. The kitchen island's top is Italian large format porcelain, and the front features a gold mother of pearl tile covering by Maya Romanoff that adds an attention-grabbing shine.

The hallway off the kitchen leading to the guest bedroom and bath features the same slab porcelain, alternating black and white stripes that Farr lovingly refers to as the piano key effect. That tile alternation extends down

Left: The bar off the living room and James' office were decorated as a salute to his office in their previous home, using the same wood tones, light fixtures and pieces of art and furniture that were reminiscent of the former space.

Right: Homeowner Susee's favorite color palette for interior decorating leans towards the neutrals of black, white and gold, but in smaller spaces she loves to add pops of bright, bold color. "If you had seen my other home, there was a lot of red and turquoise and bright yellows and even blues and wild color. I love color. ... I like boldness," she explains. The bright blue accent wall and orange sofa lend themselves to her love for brightness.



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the entire hall into the guest bathroom and up the wall of the shower for a seamless, groutless feel.

“The material excited me because you can do so much with it,” Farr explains of the choice. “[Plus], it’s anti-microbial; it will not stain or scratch. It has properties that natural stone doesn’t have that I think make it more desirable.”

The powder room down that same hallway also features a one-of-a-kind design, as Farr designed the pattern and had the pieces individually cut and installed like a puzzle.

“I think there’s a lot more individual flare that goes into a residential project, someone that really cares to make it their own, like this one, as an example,” she explains. “Even though Susee has the design eye herself, in order to pull it together and make sense of all of her dreams, she gave me stacks and stacks of visuals and then I tried to pull her [style] into her own place.”

The home also features an office for Susee with bright red cabinetry and polka dot Kate Spade wallpaper, and off the living room is a bar and office for James that Susee explains was a re-creation from their previous home.

“[James] was so upset that we weren’t going to have anything from [the previous] house, so we tried to make [his] bar and office to look like [the one in the old home],” Susee says, noting that the cabinetry, wood and light fixtures in the office reflects the wood in the previous abode.”

Farr found the vintage art deco glass for the light fixtures and had pendants made, much like a majority of the furniture in the condo. Everything from the headboards to the kitchen chairs to the beautiful black velvet couch were custom created for this beautifully bold new oasis.

“Nothing’s purchased from a store,” the Milwaukee-based interior designer explains. “It’s just impossible to find everything you want. Even the bar stools I had handmade. You can see those now in the market, but I found that I could make them the way I exactly wanted them, the height and everything, by having them made — and the price was better.”

“I love the full project where all the material selections from the flooring to the walls to how the kitchen feels as it flows into furniture and everything else,” Farr continues. “The whole cohesive design project, I think, turns out the best when it’s thought through that way from start to finish.”

As for the Wiechmanns, they not only love their new home, but also how well it reflects themselves and their passions.

“I can walk into some people’s houses and tell you who designed it,” Susee says. “With Andrea, I think it’s more of she makes it feel like you really put a lot into it. It’s you. It’s your family. It’s your home.” **MKE**



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