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Interior design by
KELLY GIESEN

Interview by
DOUGLAS BRENNER

Photographs by
PETER MURDOCK

RHAPSODY

725^{sq}
square feet

IN BLUE

ELEGANT
MOLDINGS,
FRENCH
DOORS, AND
SPARKLING
MIRROR
BRING
GLAMOUR
TO A BARE-
BONES
SPACE

Conjuring a romantic past inside her no-frills Manhattan apartment, Kelly Giesen deployed architectural salvage, including windows and doors. A Plaza Hotel mantel adorns a faux fireplace below the flat-screen TV. Glamour radiates from the vintage chandelier and seating, a Plexi-Craft table, a metallic cowhide rug, and curtains in Sultan Suzanni linen by Martyn Lawrence Bullard Design.





DOUGLAS BRENNER: How did you make a 725-square-foot, one-bedroom apartment in Manhattan feel so grand?

KELLY GIESEN: People think, Small space, why bother? But I say, 'Amp it up! Don't skimp!' The less room you have, the more you appreciate über-luxury.

Isn't that easier in a prewar building like this one that has plenty of original detail and light?

It's funny to hear that, because everything only looks original. When I first walked into the apartment, this was a bare box without a shred of character. It was as dark as a dungeon, with shrimpy doors. Then I saw the storefront-size window and the 11½-foot-high ceiling, and I thought, Ooh, I could do something with this! I've been antiquing since I was a kid, and renovating a Baltimore row house after college was my design boot camp. Here, I knocked down a wall between the kitchen and the living room to open the place up, and I put in these reclaimed doors and a salvaged mantel. The moldings, cabinetwork, and floor are all new, but I wanted them to look as if they'd been here a hundred years.

What prompted all the different Sputnik-era chandeliers?

The Hayden Planetarium is a block away! Seriously, though, I love how these starbursts give a mod vibe and sparkle to rooms with traditional bones. I'm a huge fan of glass and mirrors, which expand space, reflect light, and bring views inside. Chandeliers draw your eye upward. Something about being in a high space with massive openings makes me feel good. The mirrored French doors with oval wreaths are nine feet tall. My living room curtains go all the way to the ceiling, and their large, graphic pattern calls attention to that amazing window.

Did you scale the furniture to balance this verticality?

All the seating is low. Chairs are off the floor on exposed legs, and the coffee table is made of there-but-not-there Lucite. These pieces keep the space from feeling crowded.



The standard move would have been to put the sofa opposite the fireplace or parallel to the window.

I prefer the sofa in the corner because you see it when you come in. And with that vintage kidney-bean profile, it creates a curve inside the rectangular room, like a hug. I try to break up the box whenever I can. My mom had a similar sofa. When I was growing up, it was in the living room, and we weren't allowed to go in there. I swear the shape was imprinted in my brain. So I went out and found a version of that sofa. This arrived newly reupholstered, and of course it didn't fit into the elevator. The delivery guys had to saw it in half to get it here. Wherever I go, that sofa goes. These old shapes are so comfortable.

Was the oval kitchen window another design curveball?

Because the front door is right in the kitchen, this had to be a fantastic space. There was a weird window that was too high to see out of, and I toyed with the idea of blocking it off. But that's the first thing guests face

ABOVE: A vintage Sputnik light fixture sits on the floor like a piece of sculpture. Oak floor from Exquisite Surfaces. **OPPOSITE:** Removing one wall transformed what had been a dark galley into an airy eat-in kitchen. A pair of mirrored cupboards are flanked by glass-door cupboards with mirrored backs. Lower cabinets house refrigerator and freezer drawers and a dishwasher; they surround a Viking slide-in range. Mademoiselle chairs by Philippe Starck for Kartell and Desiron stools fit under a tabletop by Olde Good Things.

coming in, so I decided to turn it into a dramatic feature by building an oval inside the rectangular frame and uplighting it at night. The cabinets were pretty much designed to house the glassware I've collected since high school—I could host a White House dinner! All the appliances are under the counter with matching fronts, to keep a clean, open feel. There's a mishmash of hardware, but since it's all silvery, I mixed it up like jewelry. The result looks like an elegant butler's pantry.

How can a scavenger who works at home maintain such uncluttered calm? Edit down to the things you totally love. I told myself, 'You get to hang one big piece of art in the living room.' That's the Mark MacKinnon photograph above the console, a beach scene that relaxes me. The palette throughout is a soothing gray and white with sea-glass blues. Since you can see into every room—the bath opens into the kitchen!—I don't want anything that looks like clutter. It's important to use every inch you can for storage. The microwave sits behind mirrored doors above the sink. I stash office stuff inside the paneled closets on either side of the front door. Transoms up top hide items I rarely use, like Christmas lights. There's a huge chunk of molding under my bed that will go over a client's door someday.

You're obviously a big fan of molding. Molding is the best way to add architectural detail without spending an absolute fortune. That long wall in the living room was boring until I mapped out the panel design with painter's tape. The minute the contractor applied the wood trim, that surface took on a subtle personality. These plaster crown moldings were cast for me in old molds. I could have settled for off-the-shelf polyurethane, but plaster has a depth that makes a world of difference when light hits it. And that takes us back to your ceilings. Most people wake up to a blank space over their bed. I open my eyes to a leafy plaster frieze framing a crystal-ball chandelier, which is so much more fun.







To give presence to a standard entry door and separate it from the kitchen, Giesen created a "foyer" by framing the door with closets and a transom all dressed up with mirrors and molding. Finishing another awkward link, the mirrored sliding door at left shields the bathroom. Walls are in Benjamin Moore's grayish Paper White with White trim. **OPPOSITE:** A Venetian etched mirror and Kohler vessel sink paired with a console by Worlds Away ensure that even the bath offers an elegant view when the door is open.



In the 9½-by-15-foot bedroom, a custom de Gournay wallpaper panel hangs above a vintage chair in Fabricut's Chemical Bond faux leather. **RIGHT:** The Wolf Home headboard, hung on the wall to save space, is upholstered in a silver fabric from Gray Line Linen. Tiny crystals glint on a Michelle Hatch pillow. For extra shimmer, Giesen had John Mahoney's Kiku Komon wallpaper printed on silver Mylar. The chandelier is available through Kelly G Design. **FAR RIGHT:** Each curtain conceals a built-in bookcase. **FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES**



