

## Designed for Dad

Design star Vicente Wolf transformed a staid Park Avenue apartment into a welcoming haven for a father with two teenage sons.

Written by Fred A. Bernstein • Photographed by Vicente Wolf • Produced By Linda O'Keeffe



What do you do with a flat-screen TV? Hang it on the wall, and it dominates the room, without deserving to (like a painting that went blank). Stand it on a chest and it preens like a pretentious plastic sculpture.

Designer Vicente Wolf has a better idea: Place the TV on an easel. The solution is both practical (the screen can move up, down or around) and beautiful, turning the familiar rectangle into part of a larger geometry. Ingenious? All in a day's work for Wolf, whose inventiveness helped turn a "dowdy and bland" New York apartment into a lively hangout for a single father and his two sons. Wolf, who is known for ethereal interiors, usually limits his palette to whites or near-whites. Not this time. Wolf says his client wanted the place to be colorful and kid-friendly. "When he told me that, I gulped," says the top-shelf designer, who is also an accomplished photographer (Wolf shot these photos for *Met Home*). But he rose to the occasion. After removing moldings and other period details, Wolf inserted objects that are colorful without being "sweet or precious," he says. The new fireplace, of slate and stainless steel, and the upholstery—a checkerboard of rusts and blues—are as controlled as the color-field painting by the piano. Wolf learned that even a brightly hued room can be as classy and subdued as one of his meticulous white-on-white compositions.

Wolf's client, a divorced dad, wanted his teenage sons to feel comfortable hanging

out in the apartment with their friends. True, Wolf gave the father an ebony paneled library where he can close the doors behind him (opposite). But he turned the two largest spaces—a formal living room and a formal dining room (things teenage boys don't really need)—into a single 50-foot-long room they call the den. "I didn't want the kids to feel pushed out of the room," Wolf says. So he paid as much attention to their needs as to their father's. At one end is a custom sectional sofa; at the other end, a stainless steel daybed, designed by Wolf, serves as a kind of clubhouse, where the boys can "pile on" with friends and play video games. (The games are stored on elegant, high-tech Ligne Roset shelving.) Clamp-on Tolomeo lamps keep the space informal, as do the ultimate teen perk, two beanbag chairs. Carved African masks are playful without being juvenile.

"I accommodated the kids, but I didn't pander," Wolf observes. "It's never cute." It also isn't age-specific. "I wanted the room to be able to grow with them," says the designer.

Wolf grew too, he says, learning about ways to use colors without sacrificing serenity. By making one end of the room rust with blue touches, the other end blue with touches of rust, he created a balanced composition that, he says, "sort of calms itself down." When the apartment was done, "the client said it looked just the way he expected it to," recalls Wolf, adding, "I was more surprised than he was."

Wolf returned to the light-colored fabrics he is known for in the master bedroom, with carpet, bedding, drapes and walls in nearly identical tones. The room has west-facing windows, and as the sun changes position, the surfaces change appearance. Wolf made sure to exploit that opportunity. "I like a room that's in transition," says the designer. Patterns, by contrast, are fixed over time. "A floral print is always a floral print, morning, noon or night," says Wolf. "And that's too literal for me."

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And a bed is always a bed, but by placing this one in front of the windows, Wolf turned it into an island in a sea of tranquility. Flanking the bed are a table by Eero Saarinen and a tiered table designed by Wolf. Paired with identical tripod lamps, they are part of a gently asymmetrical composition.

Wolf often uses mirrors to make rooms feel bigger. Behind the bedside table is a slab of polished steel supported by two poles, mimicking the mirrors atop dressing tables. In the master bathroom, walls are covered in "silk mirror" (made by mirroring the back of acid-washed glass), which creates the illusion of extra space. (Conversely, Wolf made the vanity recede by specifying darkstained wood and dark-brown granite.) For a final, dazzling touch, he installed a stainless steel toilet, about which the client asked the obvious question: "Won't it look like a prison?" Wolf's wise response: "Have you ever seen a prison that looked like this?"

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