ON LOCATION

One Singular Sensation



When they combined their two New York City apartments, Cynthia Wong and Sudhir Gupta managed to merge their design sensibilities as well. The tufted sofa was custom-made for Ms. Wong, who wanted somewhere to curl up near the fireplace; the coffee table is a vintage Adrian Pearsall piece from Modern Living Supplies. Bruce Buck for The New York Times

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By Rima Suqi

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For years, Sudhir Gupta and Cynthia Wong and their two cats all lived together in Mr. Gupta's 550-square-foot, one-bedroom Gramercy Park apartment. And they couldn't help coveting the apartment next door, a light-filled space with generous exposures on two sides and an owner who spent most of his time somewhere else.

Eventually their neighbor agreed to sell, and after a certain amount of back and forth, Ms. Wong bought the 540-square-foot apartment in 2010 for \$510,000. (Mr. Gupta, who bought his apartment in 1998, paid what now seems almost a pittance: \$170,000.)

That's when things became interesting. Because combining two New York City apartments into one harmonious whole — the home you've been dreaming about for what feels like forever — can be challenging under the best of circumstances. But when the individuals involved have divergent tastes, it's even more difficult.

Mr. Gupta, you see, is a financial analyst who is 48 and has developed a design style that he describes as "more MoMA," referring to the streamlined aesthetic of the objects in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art.

And Ms. Wong?

"Our friends," he said, "say that Cynthia is more shabby chic."

Not surprisingly, Ms. Wong, who is 42 and works for an investment bank, disagrees with this assessment.

"I am not shabby chic!" she exclaimed. "Sid likes straight lines and everything hidden. My style is more romantic and a lot softer."

If bridging those differences wasn't challenge enough, the two were determined to continue living in the space while it was being renovated. And once the walls between the two apartments came down, Ms. Wong said, "It was complete chaos."

Mr. Gupta countered, "It was rough, but I wouldn't say it was miserable."

The couple put most of their possessions into storage and were confined to one bedroom, he said, but they always had a working bathroom: "The contractor did things in a very orderly way. He worked on one side first, then switched over."

Ms. Wong suffers from allergies that were exacerbated by the construction. "It was really tough," she said. "We didn't even have a mini-fridge, so it was like dorm living, sitting on the bed eating Chinese takeout."

This went on for eight months, but somehow their relationship survived. Sadly, their 14-year-old cats did not.

Both died of natural causes before the construction was completed in spring 2012, so they never got the chance to sink their claws into the custom upholstery or roll around on the new rugs or leap up onto the mantel of the dramatic asymmetrical fireplace that the couple's designer, Robert Kaner, created in collaboration with their architect, Rafael Berkowitz. (A discreet niche built into the kitchen wall, intended as a place for a litter box, now holds firewood instead.)

Altogether, the renovation and interior design, including all the furnishings and art, cost about \$350,000, despite splurges like the Spinneybeck leather on the chairs in the dining area, which Mr. Gupta insisted on, and the custom-made tufted settee in front of the fireplace that Ms. Wong had her heart set on.

The couple credit their designers with producing a finished space that looks like the product of a singular vision.

"I don't know how other designers work," Mr. Gupta said. "But it was nice to work with someone who was paying attention to, and involving us in, every small detail."

Ms. Wong added: "I loved it before, because home is home. But I never imagined we could have all this."

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