



The Wall™

VOL. 1 NO. 2

NEWSLETTER OF STEVEN KRATCHMAN ARCHITECT, P.C.

SPRING 2004

Our first issue of The Wall™ which featured our article "How to Stretch a Building" made a strong impression on the readership. We will build on this success.

The theme of this spring issue, is dedicated to the design of NYC residential apartments. According to Warburg Residential Advisers, residential property values have increased so significantly in the NYC market that sellers who want to return to the same market can not, so they increasingly look harder at the "stay put" option. They want to work with what they have in lieu of moving by combining apartments, maximizing every square inch, and removing as many deficiencies as possible from their existing conditions.

We are pleased to announce that we held the firm's first annual design review, which took place on April 24. Two guest critics were invited: Barry Newton, a professor of architecture from the University of Kansas (KU), and Bobby Vuyosevich, partner at Butler Rogers Baskett Architects (BRB).

Steven Kratchman, AIA, earned his first architectural degree from KU and was an employee and associate at BRB for over ten years. The purpose of this annual design review was to critique the work of the firm that has been produced over the past five years, evaluate work that is in progress, identify themes and look at the future direction and philosophy for projects and design work from multiple perspectives.



Bobby Vuyosevich Steven Kratchman Barry Newton



Steven presents as the critics and guests look and listen.

Photos by Elizabeth Sanfilippo

There is an 85 foot wall in our office which we use to display projects and is the visual backdrop to the office. It represents our working philosophy and is used to critique the work as a team and is a tool to enhance our objectivity. We "walk the Wall" daily with staff and clients. This is why our publication is entitled "The Wall™."

BEFORE PACKING TO MOVE, CONSIDER STAYING PUT

STEVEN KRATCHMAN, AIA

Important design elements to consider before expanding or renovating your apartment or home are: perception of space, circulation, scale, materials and color. Though distinct elements, they interact with one another. Successful architecture and design is an integration of all of these.

Understanding the importance of these design elements in advance will save you time, money and increase the beauty of your apartment or home. Your knowledge will prevent you from falling into the following renovation traps:

TRAP ONE: The “warts and all” condition—having to live unnecessarily with aesthetic and functional deficiencies when a little bit of analysis and creativity can remove some or all of the problem.

TRAP TWO: The “added-on” look in which the guest or visitor immediately perceives the line between the new and old.

TRAP THREE: The “unraveled thread” effect of a sweater in which redesigning part of the apartment incrementally becomes a gut rehab of the entire premises. Careful planning is the best prevention of this trap.

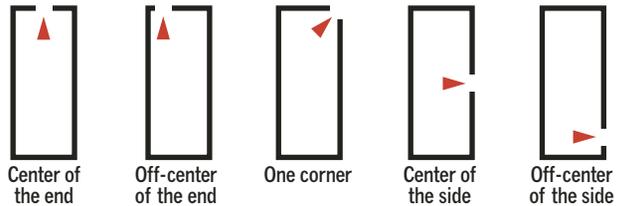
PERCEPTION OF SPACE

No apartment is perfect. Often there are existing features, such as part of the building architecture, which one assumes is inviolable. Sometimes it is possible to remove the objectionable feature or work around it. For example, some building architectures feature small windows and/or windows with very high sills, as high as three feet to four feet above the floor. Often a similarly high radiator or convector is located at the window, increasing the barrier between the room and the exterior. In addition, there may be steam risers or exposed parts of columns that are expressed, creating a visually chaotic wall. Drywall, paint, built-in millwork, window treatments, and lighting can be very effective tools for converting chaos into a controlled and pleasing result. One does not have to live with “warts and all.”

CIRCULATION

Understanding and clarifying circulation is the single most important aspect to expanding an apartment. Proceeding without this knowledge can easily contribute to the “added-on” look. Circulation is the path by which the occupant moves from room to room. Architectural elements of circulation are the front doors, hallways, corridors, entries, vestibules, galleries, aisles, walkways, stairs, ramps, steps, etc. Minimizing and giving clarity to circulation result in an efficient use of floor area and a more pleasing layout.

The front door location to an apartment or home is the beginning of the entry sequence. Its location can have a critical effect on the rest of the layout. Imagine walking into a room which has short ends and long sides and entering from the following different locations:



Each door location directly effects the perception of the space: short and squat, angular, long and skinny, balanced and composed.

The stair is a powerful tool of circulation. A stair downwards minimizes its visual impact and disappears to the floor. A stair upwards has a significant visual impact. They can dominate a room. Sometimes a wall can enclose it and become an architectural feature. It can also be a free-standing sculptural element.

SCALE

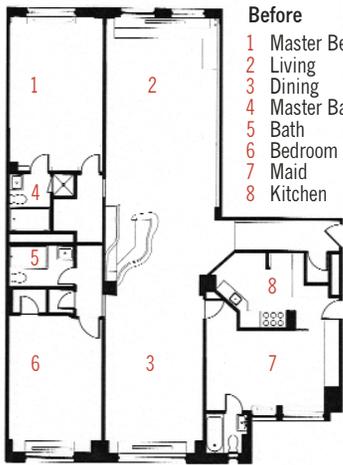
A fundamental aspect of a successful plan layout is the harmonious relationship of the parts to the whole. A foyer for a studio should look different from the foyer to a four bedroom. When apartments are combined it is very important to consider the size as if you were starting from scratch and to size in proportion to the new surface area. This is one technique in avoiding the “added-on” look.

MATERIAL AND COLOR

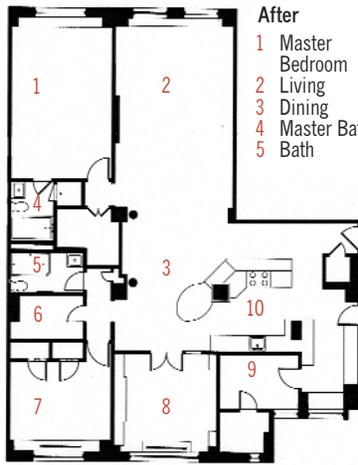
Understanding the role of flooring in an apartment or home expansion is key to avoiding the “added-on” look. The expansion space is frequently designed to someone else’s specifications. One option to consider, if continuity is important, is to sand down the floors and re-stain them to a common color (if they are wood). Another option is to introduce a border and field concept to combine two different materials. It is often more economical to remove only a border of an existing floor and replace it with a compatible color that carries through the color of the existing floor. Connecting the circulation elements (halls, entries, doors and frames, etc.) with a similar material and color will unify the expansion space and enable the new rooms and spaces to have their own unique character, avoiding the “unravelling thread” effect.

In today’s real estate market it makes sense to reconsider the “stay put” option, before packing your bags and boxes.





- Before**
- 1 Master Bedroom
 - 2 Living
 - 3 Dining
 - 4 Master Bath
 - 5 Bath
 - 6 Bedroom
 - 7 Maid
 - 8 Kitchen



- After**
- 1 Master Bedroom
 - 2 Living
 - 3 Dining
 - 4 Master Bath
 - 5 Bath
 - 6 Storage
 - 7 Bedroom
 - 8 Library
 - 9 Maid
 - 10 Open Kitchen



Before

875 Fifth Avenue, NYC

The owners of this prewar Fifth Avenue apartment wanted to recreate the detailing that originally existed in the unit but were systematically removed by a previous tenant, and at the same time create a new layout which reflected their personal style and new family.

An open kitchen and dining area which leads into the living room was created by removing all walls to the kitchen and bath pantry. Kitchen elements were enclosed and upgraded to blend in with the dark wood of the living room furniture.

The window wall facing Fifth Avenue was an unusual challenge. The proportions were horizontal, an uncharacteristic feature for prewar buildings.

The designs called for building out a wall to hide exposed columns and risers and camouflaging the existing radiator with a new one that is oversized and fitted out with storage. New lighting was provided at the ceiling. New wood floors, base molding, and picture molding were added to return some of the prewar detailing the clients wanted. A fireplace mantel was added to the living room to give it a focus.



Level One | Before

- 1 Maid
- 2 Maid
- 3 Maid
- 4 Maid

Level Two | After

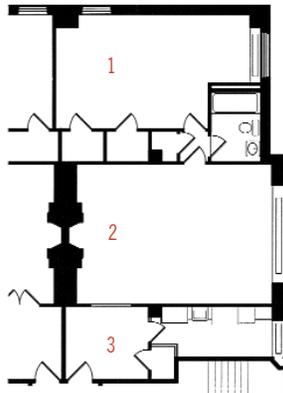
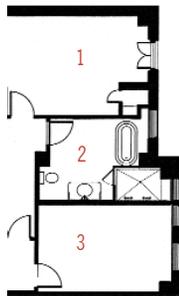
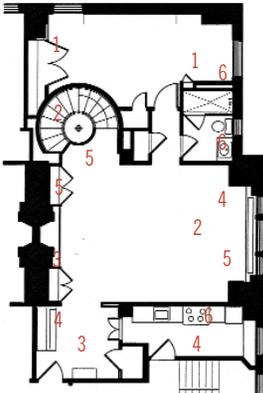
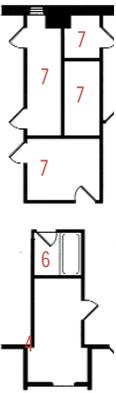
- 1 Library | Study
- 2 Living | Dining
- 3 Foyer
- 4 Kitchen

Level One | After

- 5 Stair

Level Two | Before

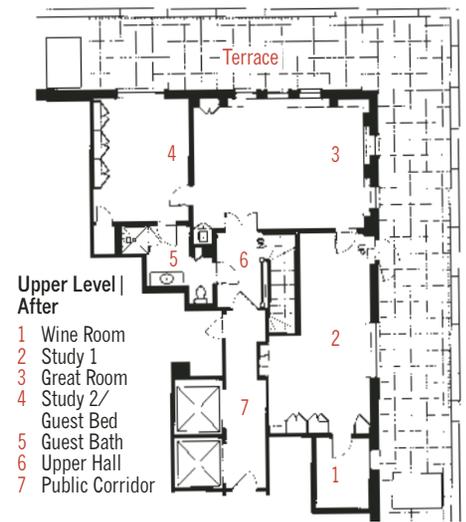
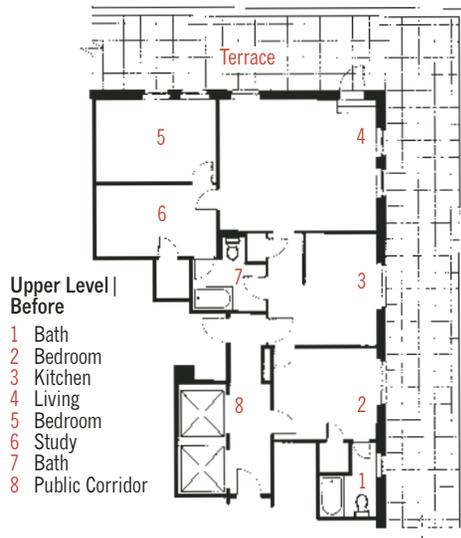
- 1 Master Bedroom
- 2 Living
- 3 Foyer
- 4 Kitchen



480 Park Avenue, NYC

The residents are a working professional couple with adult children and needed to have additional space to lodge guests, create a more spacious master bedroom suite, accommodate additional storage and a laundry room, as well as provide a home office where clients could come during the day and work in a professional setting without feeling they were in a private residence.

The solution here was to create an upside down duplex with a strategically located spiral stair which was not only space efficient but also clearly located within an architectural enclosure and archway. The traditional relationship for two-storey American houses is to locate the public rooms (living, library, foyer, kitchen, and dining) downstairs and the bedrooms upstairs. In this case the new master bedroom suite, laundry, office and guest bedroom were located below. French doors were introduced in the corridor to divide the half bath and guest bedroom, which was furnished with office furniture, bookshelves and file cabinets.



277 West End Avenue, NYC

This Upper West Side family of four opted to “stay put” and purchase the apartment located above them, after considering moving out of the city or finding and moving to a larger apartment.

They didn’t want more functional space: each of their two children had his/her own room—they preferred to improve their quality of life. They desired spaces in which they could learn, study, interact, teach, relax, pursue hobbies and special interests, and enjoy each other’s company together, in groups, individually, and with friends.

The design included a new stair up to the Penthouse level. The existing dark foyer was enlarged to the scale of two apartments. The new stair leads to a new smaller stair hall above, off of which are his and her home offices, guest bathroom/bedroom, an entertainment room, wine storage room, landscaped wrap-around terrace, roof level free of all building equipment, and new windows in new locations.

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STAFF AT WORK



STEVEN KRATCHMAN ARCHITECT, P.C., IS A FULL SERVICE ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN FIRM WHICH PLACES SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON SERVING REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS, PROPERTY AND RESIDENTIAL MANAGERS IN BOTH COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL SECTORS.

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