

creativity gets its chance

A Ridgewood couple saw home design as an art—and their new house around the corner as an ideal blank canvas.

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Design by **Anthony Passanante**
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A Ridgewood couple who welcomed a gut job to satisfy their DIY fever now has a masterpiece of a kitchen, where a fusion of styles finds happy harmony. A SubZero double fridge to the left, highly functional, scores for looks as well in its blanket of walnut.



For many buyers, a home must be move-in ready—no hassle, no fuss. But Stephanie and Louis, longtime Ridgewood residents, were infused with DIY spirit. When a house came on the market around the corner from them, it wasn't just the desirable block and the big backyard that inspired them. It was also a plus that the home needed lots of TLC, from its warped floors to its '80s décor.

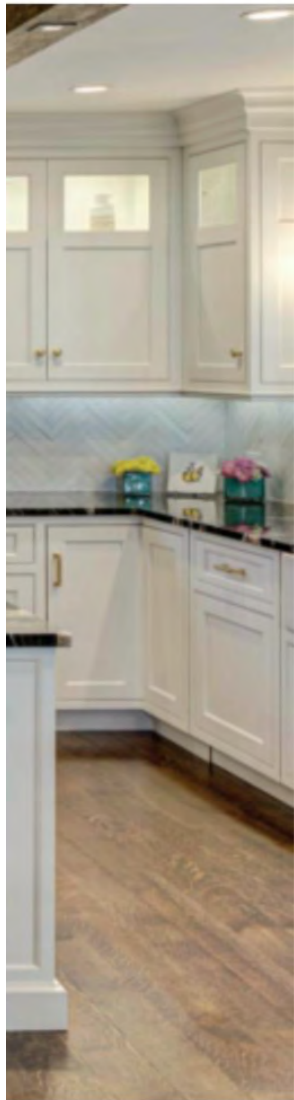
"We bought this 100-year-old house knowing we were going to renovate it," says Stephanie. "My husband and I like to redo things."

The couple with two teenage daughters thinks of renovation as an art, and they were eager to practice that art using his skills as a builder and hers in design. Thus, it was without hesitation that they took on this complete gut job in mid-2019 and called upon Waldwick-based Anthony Albert Studios to help cement their vision.

"It was an older house that needed a big face-lift," says designer Anthony Passanante. "Now it's pretty much a brand-new home."

One of the most dramatic creations is the kitchen, which was really virgin territory carved from a 2,000-square-foot expansion. Here the herringbone marble backsplash and white custom cabinetry find contrast in dark polished, white-veined granite countertops and a Tiffany blue that originated in an unlikely moment of inspiration. Both Stephanie and Passanante recall the time they met to choose custom knobs for the BlueStar stove, which, along with the custom hood, was to wow with a mix of high-gloss black, stainless-steel and polished-brass accents.

"My client that day had a beautiful purse, and it was that color—a Tiffany blue," Passanante recalls. "We



This page, right: Yes, that's Tiffany blue there on the BlueStar range knobs below the showstopping custom hood. Need we say more? Opposite page: The center island is a lesson in contrasts with its white cabinetry (designed by Anthony Albert Studios) and dark polished granite countertops. The granite's white veining marries the dichotomy for a stunning effect.







looked at each other and said, “That would be hot.” Now the Tiffany blue isn’t limited to her Hermès purse, but includes the stove knobs and the walk-in pantry’s cabinetry.

Their combined imaginations wouldn’t limit them to just one style; rather, the room is a fusion of what they admire, with highlights just waiting to be discovered. The custom cabinets, for instance, are topped with polished brass chicken wire set behind glass—a reminder of the pet chickens they once had, says Stephanie.

“I had definite ideas of things I wanted, and he designed them out,” she says. But it was teamwork, like the wood beam coffered ceiling with recessed lighting over the island inspired by a feature she admired in Passanante’s office. For the designer, it was a welcome opportunity to mix materials. “I think it brings in personality and warmth and texture,” he says.

Introducing walnut on the two SubZeros, which really don’t look like refrigerators at all, was also one of Stephanie’s ideas brought to life by Passanante.

Because entertaining is another passion, the island fits a family of four and there’s a rustic wood table for the entire gang on the white oak quarter-sawn floor. An added highlight is the window above the farm sink that sits flush with the countertop to maximize the view.

Perfectly tailored to this family’s personality is the dining room bar and whisky room. As a member of the Ridgewood Whisky Club, Louis wanted plenty of illuminated shelving to showcase his whisky-bottle collectibles. The result? A bar within a bar. Closest to the dining room is a walnut and lead-gray custom bar, wow-worthy with its round hammered brass sink and leathery-finish granite top. A window showcases the illuminated whisky room behind, which, made for the connoisseur, features a backsplash of textured antique mirrored tile in a diamond pattern and more rich walnut.

Now that the project has turned into a happy home, the couple is ready to enjoy their version of art with friends and family. And Stephanie is glad for a palette that always draws a smile. “When you see that Tiffany box, there’s nothing negative about it,” she says.

This page, left: Gaze past the hammered brass sink into the whisky room, where an antique mirrored backsplash in a diamond-configured gem. This page, right: The whisky room is a bar within a bar. Opposite page: Located in the dining room for entertaining ease, the custom bar in Benjamin Moore’s lead gray has light-up shelves for whisky treasures.

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