

# Allan Wexler

Funded by a grant from Wilsonart, Susanna Torre at Parsons School of Design commissioned a kitchen designed to fold up and roll into a closet.

When Susanna Torre, chair of the department of architecture and environmental design at Parsons, commissioned New York architect/artist/Parsons faculty member Allan Wexler to create a piece using the funds provided by Wilsonart, all she suggested was something permanent that could be stored in a recently discovered space behind a wall. Wexler, who has been working on a series of what he calls Closet Architecture, proposed a functional work that he considered a cross between architecture and sculpture.

The "kitchen" Wexler designed in response to Torre's request developed from both the department's immediate practical need for a place to serve wine and coffee after lectures and seminars and from his own theoretical concerns about the folding up and opening of space. (The commission immediately preceding this one was a so-called Crate House, sponsored by the University of Massachusetts, which collapsed an entire house into an eight-ft. cube.)





Wexler explained, "I carefully removed the wall hiding the enclosed space so as not to disturb the patina of age. I left the existing space untouched, with peeling paint, vertical heating pipes and decayed moldings. The kitchen's form is the negative of the space it comes out of. The irregularities of the space make the crate shape interesting. The slots in the counter top allow the crate to slide past the pipes inside the space." Working with H. Bradley Jenkins, a student apprentice who received independent study credit for his participation, he used generic, construction-grade plywood to craft his crates. Major portions of the cabinets were faced with gray laminates; one work surface was finished in red laminate.

The four components they built offer virtually all the services of the standard kitchen, or at least the common wet bar. The main unit, which in its closed position measures 3 ft. 9 in. wide by 7 ft. 2 in. deep by 6 ft. 3 in. high, was designed to emerge from its

hideaway and unfold into laminate-covered work surface, storage for wine glasses, wine, soda, large serving dishes, napkins, plates and cups. Other compartments were designated for waste receptacles and cleaning supplies.

Twin components, each measuring 63 in. high by 18 in. wide by 18 in. deep, were built to house other needs. Each was designed to roll away, slipping into a storage slot elsewhere in the building. One was constructed with a sink and a water hook-up for chilling the wine; the other was designed for a full coffee service and refrigerator. The fourth element, rather slimmer, has been lined, like the others, with gray laminate; a thin slip of a cupboard on wheels, it was built for storing hanging aprons.

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*Opposite, top: The main unit of this kitchen in a cabinet folds up and slips into a slot measuring 3 ft. 9 in. wide by 7 ft. 2 in. deep by 6 ft. 3 in. high.*

*Opposite, below: The main unit, when open, accommodates storage for wine, wine glasses, large utensils, snacks and waste; one surface opens for working. The wall that holds the wine glasses is dappled with glass-shaped cut-outs that let in light from the room's windows.*

*Above: The ancillary units roll away to other locations in the building for storage.*

*Left: Three other units contain the necessary spaces and appliances to offer what is essentially full bar service. Interiors are lined in laminates.*

**Laminates:** Wilsonart

**Photography:** James D'Addio

