

Guest bedroom outfitted with a custom headboard in Schumacher fabric. Wallpaper is Schumacher, throw pillows are Ashley & Sloane, and custom swagged headboard fabric is Romo Fabrics with Samuel & Son trim.



Lisa Wolfe wearing Lela Rose, Lake Forest Shop. Wolfe is reclining in her dining room with her cat, Boo

# THERE ARE SECOND ACTS IN AMERICAN LIFE

*Twenty years ago, Lisa Wolfe left the advertising world and found a home in interior design.*

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Living room. Custom sofas with Romo Fabrics and Samuel & Sons trim. Sofa pillows are a mix of custom made and Ashley & Sloane. Coffee table and side chairs are from Anna's Mostly Mahogany. Custom ottoman is covered with Romo Fabrics. Bombay chest (next to fireplace) is from 1stDibs. The window treatments are made with fabric from Fabricut with Samuel & Sons trim. The antique area rug is from Reza Rug Gallery.



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career in advertising. It's what Lisa Wolfe always wanted. Until it wasn't. "I had known that was what I wanted to do since I was in high school," recalls Wolfe, a Lake Forest resident. "To have that kind of clarity at 15 was pretty remarkable, but once I got into the industry, I realized that the dynamics of corporate

life were not a good fit for me."

Born into a military family that was always on the move, Wolfe spent many summers peeling wallpaper and clearing out renovation debris as her mother made yet another house a home. "I thought of that as a hobby," says Wolfe. "I didn't know there were actual interior designers out there." But those early experiences took root and when Wolfe decided to leave the advertising world, she set her sights on a design career. "I knew I had an innate talent—I understood what looked good—but I needed to understand the 'why'... the principles and theories behind design," she relates. "Harrington College of Design offered an associate's degree so I jumped in headfirst."

That was twenty years ago. Today, she operates Lisa Wolfe Design, a thriving, "lean and mean" boutique firm offering bespoke residential services. Like any design pro worth her salt, Wolfe always puts her clients' desires first, but she readily admits that her own taste informs what she does for homeowners. "I do have a personal style. I love fabric, I love wallpaper, I love vintage lighting. I'm obsessed with anything French. It's just the way I'm wired and that comes out in the recommendations to my clients.



Foyer with Schumacher wallpaper. Window treatment fabrics are Cowtan & Tout with Samuel & Sons trim. Mirror is Ashley & Sloane and table and side chair are from Anna's Mostly Mahogany. The side chair fabric is Pollack.

I am definitely a 'more is more person.' I want layers and layers of color and pattern and texture."

An avid traveler, Wolfe always keeps an eye peeled—not for trends, but for extraordinary motifs and forms that might inspire future projects. "The things I find follow me," she notes. "I've gone back to photos for door, window, and staircase detailing. I was in France, in the Loire Valley, and visited a chateau that had a 'mourning' room painted black, adorned with skulls and thorny crowns. All very heavy, but there was something so beautiful about it. That's been in my head since 2016 and I want to use that idea to create a custom wall treatment for a bathroom in my own house."

Wolfe and her husband, architect and contractor, Mark DiGanci, live in a former carriage house built in 1869 and transformed



Wolfe wearing Zimmerman dress, Lake Forest Shop. Wolfe is standing in her guest room with Schumacher wallpaper and an antique bed.



**TOP:** Primary bedroom with bed by Noir, bedding by Bedside Manor, and antique side tables. **ABOVE:** Dining room table and chairs from Anna's Mostly Mahogany. Fabric on chairs is Osborne & Little. The antique wall sconces are from 1stDibs. Wallpaper is Schumacher. Green side couches are from Heritage Trail Mercantile. Round yellow pillows are Ashley & Sloane.

into a residence around 1914 by the prolific architect David Adler, who designed many of the country estates on the North Shore. "We bought it about a year ago after writing the owner a letter and right now, I am my own guinea pig as I go room by room," relates Wolfe. "I am trying things I haven't asked my clients to do. For example, right now I have some white walls that I actually love. And I am someone who never wants white walls. But I have come to realize that there is a power and romance in white. But knowing me, I'll get antsy and likely change it down the road."

That said, Wolfe has not relinquished her love for color and pattern, for rooms that pulse with visual interest. In her sun-soaked living room, a pair of custom sofas upholstered in a pale sapphire fabric and sporting a tassel trim, sit atop a deep plum Persian rug. The tall windows are capped with lambrequins spun from a chartreuse floral pattern, and two antique chandeliers—acquired on a trip to Italy—drip deliciously from the high ceiling.

The dining room is a study in color, from the blue of the dining chairs and the green of the freewheeling botanical wallpaper to the pale purple pendants of the Turkish chandelier. Throughout the home, bold contrasts rule, as in a bedroom where the ceiling is painted in an almost aubergine shade and the walls are awash in an aqueous green and blue dragon paper.

Wolfe says that determining what to do next in her new home can keep her up all night, pondering the possibilities. "My home is my safe, happy place and even though it's going to be more like a jewel-toned explosion versus a beige palace, it calms me to my core. I feel a special connection to this house every time I walk in, like I'm finally home."

The house is Wolfe's dream home, a property she had missed purchasing years ago. Now that it is hers, she is going to get it just right. "Designing my home is more like an epic tale that is slowly unfolding and revealing itself in big powerful ways," she explains, "but with a business to run, it's going to take time."

She and her husband sold a lot of their possessions before moving in, as the house is not only smaller than their previous residence, "but it has a quirky layout, with radiators, window seats, and lots of closets to work around," notes Wolfe. "We simply need less, but that means everything has to count. I'm a big fan of re-purposing your precious things—stenciling or painting tables, re-covering chairs, turning favorite drapes into something else." Less doesn't mean, however, that there isn't room for beautiful new pieces nor that the search for that perfect wallpaper must end.

*For more information, visit [lisawolfe.com](http://lisawolfe.com).*