

Big On Impact

A vintage Chicago home gets a cozy flea market feel with a lively palette, oversized patterns and unique pieces.



MOLDING MAKES THE MANTEL
The fireplace was improved with a new mantel made from crown molding and new trellis-style tiles.

950-SQ.-FT. CONDO

- **DECORATING STYLE:** Very eclectic and vibrant, with a Parisian flea market feel
- **RENOVATIONS:** Redid floors, kitchen, fireplace, bathroom
- **BIGGEST DESIGN CHALLENGE:** Trying to fit in room to live and work and have space for three cats, too, all while wanting it to look beautiful
- **BEST SMALL-SPACE SOLUTION:** A pass-through wall that divided the kitchen and the hallway was knocked down, and in its place a two-way bookcase was constructed that offers storage and display space
- **BIGGEST ADVANTAGE TO SMALL-SPACE LIVING:** You can't hang onto things you don't use
- **BIGGEST DISADVANTAGE:** You have to have a purpose and place for everything
- **HOMEOWNER SUGGESTION:** Don't adhere to standard floor plan, but change rooms to fit how you live; here, the owner does without a dining room
- ★ **GOOD SOURCES:** West Elm is a great source for baskets and shelving ideas

BY BARBARA BALLINGER

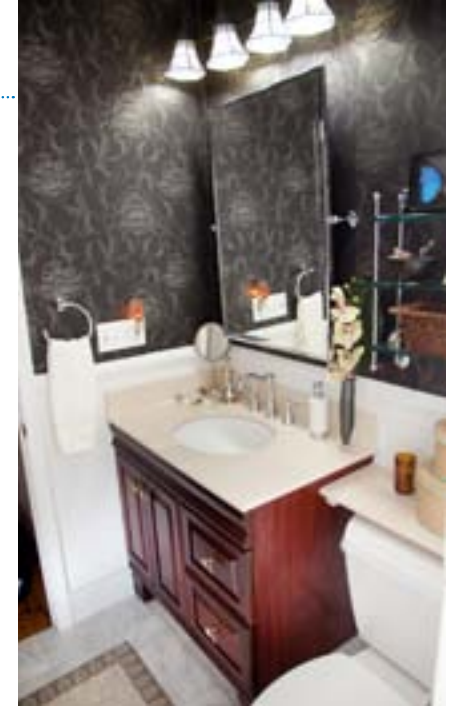
WHEN IT CAME TIME FOR CHICAGO DESIGNER LISA WOLFE TO PURCHASE HER FIRST HOME five years ago, the diminutive size of the condo she found in a 1920s building represented an extra challenge, since she planned to operate her firm, Lisa Wolfe Design (lisawolfedesign.com), from home as well as live there. And home in this case was only 950 square feet with one bathroom. But there were several upsides that more than compensated. The unit was located in a brick building with a courtyard in the city's desirable Uptown area; it overlooked a tree-lined street; and it presented its owner/designer with an infrastructure of good bones. Of course, Lisa knew how to make the most of small spaces, based on her experience as a designer.

DREAMS OF GRANDEUR
Vintage French doors separate the living room and master bedroom; the glass panes make both rooms look larger. To give the bedroom its dose of wow, designer/owner Lisa Wolfe papered the wall behind the bed. "The room shows how you can use pattern with pattern—from the paper to the spread to the striped pillow and the inlaid night table," she says.



SOPHISTICATED IN BLACK & WHITE

Black wallpaper with a floral motif adds romance and also expands the feeling of the otherwise white/wood bathroom. Lisa added the new floor, chair railing and wainscoting for a clean, fresh look. She then introduced an old-world-style vanity that's not only simpatico with the condo's era but also functional, with ample storage.



TAPESTRY AS FOCAL POINT

In her home office, Lisa framed a Turkish tapestry as the room's main piece of art, proving her theory that something large looks right even in a small space. She painted walls a soft orange and kept the floor bare. An extra table behind her desk allows her to keep essential work supplies within view and a reach away.



1 room, 2 uses

Instead of trying to divide the living room into two sections—one for lounging and one for dining—Lisa made the entire room for sitting, but she can wheel in her cart from the kitchen for seated dinners.

Mismatched Pieces

In order to make it work, Lisa followed several guiding principles that anyone decorating a small space should heed. First, she says, keep only furnishings you love rather than trying to squeeze in everything. Add pieces along the way, but you don't need to make them match; instead, celebrate each item's uniqueness and the items will end up working well together.

Lisa also incorporates shelving and storage in each room, sometimes open and sometimes concealed. For drama and beauty, she recommends that you use bold, overscaled patterns

in lively colors and a palette in each room of several hues, and then balance that mix with some solids. Leaving floors bare, except for a few area rugs, will help with continuity between the spaces and make individual rooms look larger, she says. And finally, have a mirror in every room to expand space visually.

Not Just a Kitchen

For her own home, Lisa decided on a palette primarily of corals, turquoises and creams, inspired by travels to Turkey and Morocco. In the entry, she removed a wall with a pass-through between the hall and kitchen, and she

constructed a two-sided, floor-to-ceiling bookshelf that also makes for a handsome divider. She painted it a deep blue, almost black, for an immediate wow factor.

In the kitchen, Lisa made the room function better and also look smarter by painting the maple cabinets white, since she believes that hue always acts as a space extender. She also added crown molding to introduce a more finished look, painted two walls a pale taupe, and installed a creamy granite for countertops and milk-glass colored mosaic tiles on the backsplash. "Whites and creams make a room look larger," she says.



new again

To refresh the kitchen, Lisa painted the original cabinets white and installed backsplashes in a milk-glass colored mosaic tile.

Then she gave the space its pow with a bold floral wallpaper topped by a round mirror to magnify the space. A vintage orange pendant finishes the effect, which makes it “look more like a room rather than just a kitchen,” Lisa says. Modern stainless steel appliances add to the reflective surfaces in the room. For eating, Lisa designed a movable island that she sometimes pushes into the living area for dinner parties, since she eliminated a formal dining area there to conserve space for sitting.

The living room demonstrates her flair for mixing colors and patterns, with walls painted a pale turquoise, which is repeated in the curtains and an ottoman, which acts as a central hub to link the other items. The room’s boldness comes through mostly in Lisa’s choice of tiles for the fireplace.

She repeated similar decorating principles in her master bedroom, where she papered one wall in a vintage pattern and picked an organic design for the spread and a stripe for the pillow.

Her small second bedroom became her office. Here, the boldness Lisa desires shows up in a framed tapestry. In the home’s one bathroom, she installed neutral floor and wall tiles and wainscoting to make the room look larger. A new vanity with vintage cachet provides important storage, supplemented by an open shelf above the toilet. And again in this room, she added some wow with her choice of black wallpaper with a larger-scaled design that gives the room both its spiffy and spacious feel.



GET THE LOOK

drama without trauma

4 steps to designing with color and patterns—new and old, big and small

1. Mix geometric, organic and floral patterns for more interesting décor. Be sure you strike a good balance between flowing, round edges and linear designs. “If, when you’re layering patterns, one pattern gets lost, it’s no good,” says interior designer Lisa Wolfe. “Start over and try another combination.”
2. Don’t be afraid to put layers of color together in light, medium and dark hues, but also pick one favorite color to stand out. Ignore rules that this doesn’t go with that. In her own kitchen, Lisa mixed blue-and-white patterned plates with beige and brown wallpaper and a vivid orange lamp overhead plus a green table lamp base. The mix makes the room look like it evolved rather than being matchy-matchy or instantly decorated.
3. Layer together different styles of furniture as well as new and old pieces. “The most useful exercise to find your favorite style or styles is to go through magazines and clip what you love. I never talk about a concept for a client until I’ve seen what they’ve picked,” Lisa says.
4. Use various types of lighting, from chandeliers to sconces to floor and table lights. Dimmers on fixtures will also give you great mood-making flexibility and will change the nature of the colors, patterns and textures you’ve put in the room.



DRAMATIC DIVIDER The floor-to-ceiling bookshelf features good storage on both sides. The piece replaced a less attractive, nonfunctional pass-through. With its elegant deep blue, almost-black color, the bookshelf attracts visitors’ attention and gives the room a sophisticated ambience.