

# Divide and Conquer

IN MONMOUTH COUNTY, A DESIGNER INFUSES  
LARGE SPACES WITH FUNCTIONAL FLAIR



WRITTEN BY MARIROSE KRALL  
PHOTOS BY RAQUEL LANGWORTHY  
DESIGN BY KAREN B. WOLF INTERIORS

The dining room chairs feature easy-care vinyl on the seats and luxurious velvet on the backs. The starburst chandeliers are an eye-catching element. “We like to use two light fixtures over long tables,” says designer Karen Wolf. “It really balances the room.”

Spectacular light fixtures add a bit of glitz against the natural tweed wall covering. “The juxtaposition of the natural textile with the sheen conveys an approachable luxe,” says Wolf. The dining table is finished with a catalyzed varnish that is, says the designer, indestructible.

“**H**ow do I make it special?” That was the question Karen Wolf asked herself when she was called upon to transform a newly built residence into an inviting home for her clients. Fashioning distinctive spaces within the sprawling home was quite a challenge, says the designer, owner of Karen B. Wolf Interiors in Short Hills. “The house is ample and has so many spaces that can be utilized for specific functionality.” Her decorative strategy involved “dividing the living spaces and working within the proportions of these rooms. Spatial planning was a very large part of this project,” she notes.

The plan involved creating visual cues to separate large spaces into distinct activity areas. Using this approach, Wolf was able to make even the largest room in the house — one of the children’s bedrooms — into a cozy, comfortable retreat. She reined in the vast space by installing a wooden beam to create two defined sections — a sleeping area and an activity area.

In the family room, another sizable space, the designer used a pair of matching spherical chandeliers to mark



Wolf felt that the high ceiling in the family room was too flat, so she spiced it up with coffers. The wood tones help warm the space. “We added some contrast so that it wasn’t a traditional coffer,” she says.



Wolf selected all the art for the house, carefully specifying color and size. “When you rescale art to fill a space, it starts to move from decorative to intentional and looks more informed,” she explains.



An antiqued, smoked mirror reflects the stunning living room. “The ceiling feature completes the essence of the room,” says Wolf.



Built-ins behind the piano in the living room offer a convenient space for listening to an impromptu concert.

each half of the room. “We divided the room into two living spaces and centered the light fixtures over each area.”

Ceiling adornment played an integral role in Wolf’s design plan throughout the residence. It was a tactical decision based on the desire to add some depth to the home’s 10-foot ceilings. To that end, the designer installed a substantial coffered ceiling in the family room and eye-catching geometric fretwork on the living room ceiling.

In the playroom, which features a ceiling that rises to almost 15 feet, Wolf added a pair of trusses. The heavy beams draw the eye and fill up the volume of the room’s vaulted ceiling. Large, feathery light fixtures further define the air space. And “custom-designed built-ins separate the hangout area and the gaming area,” adds Wolf.

The designer also used hits of bright color to “fill” the large room visually. Faced with a limited selection of builder-option carpet, she explains, “I decided the best approach was to take a darker rug and pop color off it.” The first colors chosen were on the window treatment fabric, which features an easygoing combo of blue, orange and white stripes in various widths. Orange coffee tables are a fun addition to the space, standing out against the two white sectional sofas, which are themselves accessorized with throw pillows in various shades of purple and blue. Two abstract art pieces mimic those hues. “I love the way color pops and the patterns play in that space,” says Wolf.

But this house is not just playful and beautiful, it’s also user-friendly, as requested by the homeowners. “They wanted practical, performance-based fabrications along with materials that would still convey a sense of drama,” explains

Wolf. To meet both objectives, the designer was able to combine function with flair, juxtaposing and layering materials for a look she calls “livable luxe.”

The dining room features a prime example: “The insides of the chairs are upholstered in wipeable vinyl,” she notes. “The backs are in a velvet, which is not a performance-based fabric, but that’s what gives you luster and a high-end look.” Similarly, in the family room, the custom sectional sofa is upholstered in practical Crypton fabric. In the children’s rooms, high-end furniture rests on carpet specifically selected for stain resistance.

In furnishing this new, blank slate of a home, Wolf achieved a look that features family-friendly practicality without sacrificing sophisticated style. “The clients definitely wanted a ‘wow’ factor,” she says. “How do you make it special?” Clearly, the designer found a multitude of ways. ■

**SOURCES Overall:** design, Karen B. Wolf Interiors in Short Hills; builder, Toll Brothers. **Dining Room:** wall covering, Phillip Jeffries in Fairfield (T); carpet, Exquisite Rugs; light fixtures, Robert Abbey; window treatments, Palmetto Window Fashions; custom dining table and base, T3 Custom Furniture; chairs, Precedent; artwork, Art Addiction; placemats, Z Gallerie; napkins, West Elm; china cabinet, Vanguard Furniture. **Family Room:** wall covering, Phillip Jeffries; carpet, Exquisite Rugs; chandeliers, Kalco; drapery and window shades, Pindler; custom fireplace and fireplace tile, Toll Brothers; artwork above fireplace, Celadon Art; sofa, Vanguard Furniture; armchair, Bernhard; coffee table, Four Hands; side table next to armchair, Lillian August; side table next to sofa, Interlude Home; basket next to fireplace, Dovetail; fur throw pillows, Decorum; leather pillows, Classic Home (T); console behind couch, Regina Andrew; gray throw rug behind couch, Fibre by Auskin; artwork next to French doors, One of a Kind Art Gallery. **Living Room:** wall covering, Phillip Jeffries; armchairs, Bernhard; carpet, Prestige Mills; console, Vanguard Furniture covered in fabric from Romo Inc.; ottomans



TOP LEFT | Wolf divided the largest room in the house — a bedroom — into sections separated by a wood beam. A focal wall of hardwood and a hanging basket chair draw the eye and help to fill the expansive space. A barn door (at right) separates the bedroom from the adjoining sitting room.

BOTTOM LEFT | Wolf “started with the fun wallpaper” in a daughter’s room. The nightstands are wrapped in a hot pink linen fabric.

A palette of black, white and gray with hits of hot pink gives the bedroom a glamorous vibe.

TOP RIGHT | A tray ceiling in the master bedroom helps define the sleeping area and frames the extraordinary light fixture.

BOTTOM RIGHT | “The clients wanted a fully complete and accessorized home” says Wolf, who embellished the master bedroom sitting area with a variety of throw pillows, a soft fur rug and a triptych featuring a cross section of a tree. “I love that piece of art,” she adds.





The “bonus room” at the top of the stairs became a playroom that beckons both kids and adults. “We selected the rug and the window treatments and then wove the colors through,” says Wolf.



Custom cabinetry offers convenient storage for books and games

beneath console, HomeGoods; throw pillows, Z Gallerie and Bloomingdale’s; cabinet, Old Biscayne Designs; piano, Steinway; custom window seat cushion fabric, Stark (Scalamandré); art behind piano, Zoe Bios Creative through Wendover Art Group; chandelier over piano, Savoy House. **Master Bedroom:** wall covering, Phillip Jeffries; carpet, Momeni in Carlstadt; bed, RH; bedding, Bloomingdale’s; side table, bench at foot of bed and dresser, Vanguard Furniture; chandelier, Murray Feiss; custom window treatments, Karen B. Wolf Interiors; artwork above dresser, Celadon Art. **Master Bedroom Seating Area:** wall color, Benjamin Moore “Plymouth Rock”; carpet, Fibre by Auskin; sofa, Burton James; chair, Ambella; custom shade, Karen B. Wolf Interiors; “G” end table, Universal Furniture; coffee table, Worlds Away; ceiling light fixture, Crystorama; lamp on table next to sofa, Wostbrock Home in Ridgewood; throw pillows on sofa and chair, Crate & Barrel; throw blanket on sofa, Safavieh; artwork, Celadon Art. **Playroom:** wall color, Benjamin Moore “White Dove”; wall covering, Thibaut; custom window shades, Karen B. Wolf Interiors; sofas, Precedent; throw pillows, Precedent and HomeGoods; carpet, Toll Brothers; custom orange coffee tables, Ultimate Upholstery & Drapery in South Orange; ceiling light fixtures, RH Teen; artwork behind sofas, Wendover Art Group. **“Twiggy” Bedroom:** bed, Basset Furniture; bedding, Macy’s; throw pillows on bed, PB Teen and Safavieh; side tables, Society Social in color Benjamin Moore “Peony”; wall covering, JF Fabrics; striped window treatment, Duralee (Robert Allen) with fringe from Samuel & Sons; light fixtures above bed and desk, Dainolite; desk and bench at foot of bed, Wayfair; desk chair, Designmaster Furniture upholstered in vinyl from Kravet; carpet, Toll Brothers; sitting area wall color, Sherwin-Williams “Knitting Needles”; hanging chair, Modholic in Hawthorne; custom white shades, Karen B. Wolf Interiors; artwork, Oliver Gal. **Wood Frame Bedroom:** wall color, Benjamin Moore “Valley Forge Tan”; table area ceiling color, Benjamin Moore “Oxford Gray”; custom banquette seat cushion and window shades, Karen B. Wolf Interiors; floral art, Sugarboo & Co.; bed, Precedent; bedding, UGG; side table, Sonder Living; lamp on side table, Kirkland’s; bench at foot of bed, Lee Industries; table and hanging chair, Wayfair; chairs around table, Lulu and Georgia; chandelier in table area, Savoy House; carpet, Toll Brothers. T = To the trade

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