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Photographer: Karen Melvin

FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION

BY IVY A. GRACIE

Is your dining room table a place to drop the junk mail? How often do you walk past your formal living room on the way to a cozier spot? You're not alone; most people move into a home and try to live around the way it's designed. But Lola Watson, owner of Lola Watson Interior Design in Minneapolis, is shifting that paradigm, inspiring her clients to design their homes around their lifestyles.

"It's my whole approach," says Lola. "How are you using your space, and who does your house need to function for?" Noting that change is inevitable, she creates designs that grow and evolve with her clients. "Family sizes increase. People get pets," she says. "You tweak the house as you go. It's about blending things that help us live better, function better in our homes, and reflect our personal taste. The house is not a trend; it's the reality of what's happening right now."

Watson recognizes that not all design trends apply *en masse*. "I have a client who doesn't use an oven," she says, "so she doesn't have double ovens; she has two microwaves because that's the way she cooks." But she advises her clients to stay within the realm of realism. "I convinced my client to have one oven for resale. I'm not going to encourage someone to do something that's so far out that it will create a white elephant." Still, Watson suggests that resale shouldn't be one's first concern. "You don't buy your house because it's perfect for the next person," she says. "You can't win that battle."

But you can use space more efficiently. "If you never use a space, can you do something different with it?" asks Lola. "You might host a large open house once a year, but you're going to have to use your space the other 364 days. How can we make it right for most of the time?" Lola likes to incorporate adaptable furniture that can

convert to meet different needs. "Something can be beautiful, but it can also be functional," she says. "True beauty comes from having both."

And you can tastefully infuse your home with your personal style. Watson suggests blending and juxtaposing significant pieces throughout the home to create continuity. "Everywhere you go in the house you're going to discover something. That's what makes it interesting."

"You go through model homes and they all look alike. It's boring," says Watson. "The beauty of humankind is our diversity. People from many different cultures are coming together," she says. "There's no set definition for family, and you just can't categorize people anymore. So you analyze the client's actual needs instead of giving them standard, traditional design." ■