

TWIN CITIES

# SPACES

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FALL  
WINTER  
**2006**  
RESOURCE  
GUIDE







# A Beautiful Life

by Bonnie Blodgett  
Photographs by Karen Melvin

**TALK ABOUT A DREAM ASSIGNMENT.** INTERIOR DESIGNER LOLA WATSON'S clients had just purchased a 1921 home on Lake Minnetonka, with water on three sides. The challenge was to make the place, originally designed for a mother and a daughter as a sort of side-by-side duplex with mirror-image entries and floor plans, feel like a cozy, single home for a growing family with several dogs and cats.

The new owners happen to be avid collectors, especially fond of Federal period antiques. They were determined that their home accommodate their treasures as well as the boisterous lifestyles of its occupants—all of them. If the children grew up in the company of nice things, the clients reasoned, they would be more likely to appreciate and care for them.

The look of Wedgwood china inspired interior designer Lola Watson to paint the living room a warm light blue and the woodwork linen white. Raised mouldings like those above the windows and doorways, called dado, were popular in the Georgian-influenced architecture of the antebellum south, where Watson lived and worked before moving to Minneapolis.





A young child's "girly" bedroom will mature as she does. Its wallpaper, suitable for a five-year-old, is a Bunnykins (from the nursery rhyme) pattern from Brunschwig and Fils.

HER ROOM IS FOR A *little girl*  
NOW  
BUT IT WILL *easily*  
*grow up* WITH HER

"Accidents happen, of course," Watson says. "But stains can always be removed." While the dogs don't spend much time in the living room—the most formal room of the house—the cat loves to plop on one of the two comfy ottomans or nestle into a corner of the sofa. The children likewise have pretty much free run of the place. The oldest daughter (five at the time) even helped Watson furnish her own bedroom.

"She's a girly girl," Watson says. "I wouldn't be surprised if she became a designer some day. She loves to play with colors and fabrics." Her room is for a little girl now but it will easily grow up with her, thanks to the glamorous chocolate brown carpet (by Stark) and the custom-made, sleigh-style double bed that Watson designed, featuring a pull-out trundle bed behind the pleated plaid fabric, for overnight guests.

Here as elsewhere in the house, the mix of antique and reproduction pieces adds up to a one-of-a-kind-interior, created for this family only. "I don't have a signature look," Watson explains. "I don't design rooms that look like me, but like the people who live in them."

These clients wanted warmth and comfort, as well as beauty. The layered look of the floor coverings in the living room speak to their wide-ranging tastes and interests. The original terrazzo tile floors are covered with coarse sisal softened by a third layer—an antique carpet, with colors that pull the room together. “These colors were the starting point,” Watson says. The blue walls felt right with the lake setting and the Wedgwood-china feel of the room, with its gorgeous woodwork and many windows. The blue complements the reds and yellows.

Informal woven grass shades in this room and wood shutters in the sunroom off the living room let in lots of light but offer privacy, too. The Sheraton period valences add a formal note. Their Brunschwig and Fils toile fabric matches that of the sofa. “Unfortunately, the valance fabric turned out to be a bit darker when it arrived, so I added the dark red silk trim to punch up the white background and make the two seem identical, an old designer’s trick.” Baker sofa and chairs and a contemporary cocktail table share the conversation area with an antique side table, typical of the way the clients like to juxtapose old and new.

In the dining room a mural captures the feel of an English or antebellum





Southern manor house. The solid mahogany dining table extends to 18 feet; both it and the chairs are English Georgian (the European version of American Federal furniture tends to be a bit larger, as it was scaled to fill more spacious rooms). Watson found the table and the chairs separately at John Doughty Antiques in San Francisco.

"When I showed the wife the pictures, she just had to have it," says Watson. "She decided to call it a birthday gift—to herself." ■

*Bonnie Blodgett writes about gardens and homes from her Crocus Hill home in St. Paul.*

A blue similar to that in the living room appears in the sky and water in the dining room mural painted by Minneapolis artist Carolynne Darling to evoke both the home's Lake Minnetonka site and the shoreline of colonial Connecticut. The brass chandelier is by Charthouse. The candelabra, vase, and tea set in the corner of the room are Belgian silver.





