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LIVE WHAT YOU LOVE

INTERIOR DESIGNER TAKES IT HOME WITH HER



LIFE IN THE SUBURBS: DESIGNER LEIGH ANNE MUSE

written by
BRANDON FOX

photographed by
ADAM EWING





"We use this house hard, and that's the way it should be."

—LEIGH ANNE MUSE



LEFT: Flanked by Henredon chairs and paired with a spiral-based, travertine-topped side table, an antique round table anchors the entryway. The base of the table lamp (purchased from Kenny Ball Antiques in Charlottesville) is made from a French yarn spool, and beside it is a tortoise-shell tea caddy brought home from a trip to Aix-en-Provence. **ABOVE LEFT:** A Klismos-inspired bench, custom upholstered in a deep-taupe sueded leather by Swaim, offers a cosy fireside perch. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Continuing the tortoise-shell theme on the entryway tabletop are these stringed instruments from Kim Faison Antiques in Richmond.

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Tell us what's important to you," designer Leigh Anne Muse of O'Brien and Muse instructs her clients right off the bat, "because we don't have any idea what it is."

Incorporating pieces that are near and dear to the heart is central to Muse's design philosophy. An enclosed porch in her near-West End Cape Cod was reimagined as a fly-tying study for Jim Muse, her husband and an avid fisherman. The house itself once belonged to his grandparents.

"One of my mantras . . . is 'live what you love,'" she says. Family pieces are scattered throughout the house, and in the small study, the focal point is an old family desk, used daily by her husband. Above it, mounted animal skulls, antlers and an enormous fish punctuate the surrounding walls.

"I try [to] use everything I get from my family," she says. "We use our silver every single day. Things like that make a difference to us. It reminds us of where [it] came from but [we're] enjoying it at the same time."

As newlyweds eight years ago, Muse and her husband

LEIGH ANNE MUSE'S SMALL-SPACE TIPS

- 1 Fewer, larger pieces make a space appear much bigger. springboard; use color and pattern sparingly to create interest.
- 2 Choose a focal point and balance objects and furnishings to enhance rather than compete with that focal point.
- 3 Stick with a monochromatic color scheme as a
- 4 Avoid over-accessorizing: Each item should have meaning within the space.
- 5 Consider built-in bookshelves and storage solutions. Look for furniture that has more than one use.

started out in the house very simply, with a neutral palette and just a few things.

"We didn't have much of a budget — in fact, we ended up doing much of the work ourselves."

They added to the home over the years, with artwork and other antiques picked up along the way. One thing Muse recommends when outfitting a small space is "measuring six times before ordering."

Most of today's furniture is overscaled, she says, and it's worth "taking the time to lay out a square of paper and walk around it. See how you maneuver around the room."

For Muse, that process resulted in converting a seldom-used dining room into another living space so that the house would be more comfortable for frequent entertaining. She also changes accessories and moves pictures around constantly, "because in a small house I'd get bored with it if everything stayed the same all the time."

"We use this house hard," she says, "and that's the way it should be. You need to live in it." ■



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: An 18th-century wall cabinet holds silver baby cups from the Muses' extended family. **RIGHT:** Muse's great-grandmother crocheted the cotton coverlet on the bed, and the bolster pillow was converted from a piece of needlepoint. **BELOW RIGHT:** Muse's husband, a collector of "all things natural" makes daily use of this office-study space, surrounded by an assortment of horns, shells, antlers and bird eggs. **BELOW LEFT:** Among the many fly-fishing lures stored in the desk.





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