

Great Ideas from Our San Francisco Showhouse

Metropolitan Home

29 Top
Designers
Tell All

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*Sophisticated
wit in a colorful
new house in the
Hamptons, p.84.*

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Designer Vicente Wolf enlivened the foyer of a Park Avenue apartment by covering the marble floor with a graphic combination of natural and russet-colored carpets, stripping off moldings so new furniture would pop, and even providing a view of the kitchen (through the bookshelves, which are backless). Wolf bought the Indonesian table and the architectural Thai devotional objects on his frequent trips to Asia.

Different Strokes

Design superstar Vicente Wolf went beyond the pale of his signature look to create this sophisticated, comfortable and youth-friendly *Park Avenue* apartment for a single father and his two teenage sons.





What do you do with a flat-screen TV? Hang it on the wall, and it dominates the room, without deserving to (like a painting that went blank). Stand it on a chest and it preens like a pretentious plastic sculpture.

Designer Vicente Wolf has a better idea: Place the TV on an easel. The solution is both practical (the screen can move up, down or around) and beautiful, turning the familiar rectangle into part of a larger geometry. Ingenious? All in a day's work for Wolf, whose inventiveness helped turn a "dowdy and bland" New York apartment into a lively hangout for a single father and his two sons. Wolf, who is known for ethereal interiors, usually limits his palette to whites or near-whites. Not this time. Wolf says his client wanted the place to be colorful and kid-friendly. "When he told me that, I gulped," says the top-shelf designer, who is also an accomplished photographer (Wolf shot these photos for *Met Home*). But he rose to the occasion. After removing moldings and other period details, Wolf inserted objects that are colorful without being "sweet or precious," he says. The new fireplace, of slate and stainless steel, and the upholstery—a checkerboard of rusts and blues—are as controlled as the color-field painting by the piano. Wolf learned that even a brightly hued room can be as classy and subdued as one of his meticulous white-on-white compositions.

This page (clockwise from top left): A custom sofa by Vicente Wolf dominates the "adult end" of the large den (previously a formal living room and a dining room); a side chair was purchased by Wolf in Ethiopia (art by David Saile); the Arne Jacobsen Egg chair by the television is upholstered in Edelman leather (sculpture by Wendy Fisher). Opposite: The console table and round bronze tray are from China and Thailand, respectively (art by Callum Jones).

PRODUCED BY LINDA O'KEEFE. PHOTOGRAPHS BY VICENTE WOLF. WRITTEN BY FRED A. BERNSTEIN







Wolf returned to the light-colored fabrics he is known for in the master bedroom, with carpet, bedding, drapes and walls in nearly identical tones. The room has west-facing windows, and as the sun changes position, the surfaces change appearance. Wolf made sure to exploit that opportunity. "I like a room that's in transition," says the designer. Patterns, by contrast, are fixed over time. "A floral print is always a floral print, morning, noon or night," says Wolf. "And that's too literal for me."

And a bed is always a bed, but by placing this one in front of the windows, Wolf turned it into an island in a sea of tranquility. Flanking the bed are a table by Eero Saarinen and a tiered table designed by Wolf. Paired with identical tripod lamps, they are part of a gently asymmetrical composition.

Wolf often uses mirrors to make rooms feel bigger. Behind the bedside table is a slab of polished steel supported by two poles, mimicking the mirrors atop dressing tables. In the master bathroom, walls are covered in "silk mirror" (made by mirroring the back of acid-washed glass), which creates the illusion of extra space. (Conversely, Wolf made the vanity recede by specifying dark-stained wood and dark-brown granite.) For a final, dazzling touch, he installed a stainless steel toilet, about which the client asked the obvious question: "Won't it look like a prison?" Wolf's wise response: "Have you ever seen a prison that looked like this?"

See Resources, last pages.

This page (clockwise from top left): Designer Vicente Wolf; the stainless steel toilet in the master bathroom "matches" the custom cabinetry; for the master bedroom, Wolf designed the woven-leather bed and the ebonized-wood side table (drapes are Thai silk). Opposite: A classic Saarinen table from Knoll and Sirocco floor lamps from Togo stand beside the custom bed. Dino, the family's King Charles spaniel, enjoys the plush custom drape.





Key to the Style

- *Imperfect symmetry:* By using pieces of similar size but completely different shape, Wolf creates harmony without monotony.
- *Restricting the palette to a few shades creates a composition that "calms itself."*
- *Typically, Wolf avoids pattern, which he finds "too literal," in favor*

- of light-colored surfaces that change appearance over the course of a day.*
- *Wolf mirrors walls in a variety of ways to make spaces seem bigger.*
- *For a graphic effect on the floor, Wolf stitched together two kinds of carpet.*
- *Curved pieces (a piano, beanbag chairs, Saarinen tables) suggest an easy, natural flow through rooms.*

