

SIZE MATTERS

After working in more than twenty-five high-rises in Boston, designer Paula Daher knew exactly how to make her demure South End loft live luxe.

BY ERIKA AYN FINCH



In designer Paula Daher's South End living room, an art deco-inspired glass lamp gifted to her and her husband on their first wedding anniversary by her mother-in-law found a home on a charcoal-gray console.



W

e hear a lot about homeowners who downsize when their kids fly the nest, but interior designer (and 2023 New England Design Hall of Fame inductee) Paula Daher prefers to use a different term when describing her family's decision to relocate from an expansive Back Bay townhouse to an 1,100-square-foot South End loft. "We rightsized," she says.



ABOVE: Daher re-covered a pair of antique French chairs that she first used years ago in a Neiman Marcus showhouse with Casamance upholstery. The sconce on the left is backed with pink Carrara marble, which gives it an ethereal glow. **LEFT:** A luxe blue velvet lining the foyer's niche acts as a conversation starter. "Everyone wants to touch it," says Daher.



With a second home in Kennebunk, Maine, Daher and her husband decided they didn't need much square footage, so they set out to find a space in Boston's

South End—"We love the soul of the neighborhood," Daher says—that had outdoor space and, above all, abundant light. The couple was drawn to this apart-

When the kitchen cabinets first arrived, they were painted Sherwin-Williams Baked Clay instead of Benjamin Moore Baked Clay. "They were Barbie pink," says Daher, laughing. "They had to go back." All of the floors in the loft are polished concrete.



ment due, in part, to its eleven-and-a-half-foot-tall ceilings and semi-industrial vibe. Unfortunately, the floor plan of the 1990s-built space needed to be reworked

to meet their needs. “Functionality is the root of all my projects,” Daher says. “You can make a small space live large.”

From there, Daher embarked on

Daher inherited the 1970s Roche Bobois marble table in the dining area from her former Back Bay neighbors. She surrounded it with chairs from CB2. “I love the femininity of the chair backs,” she says. An latesta Studio chandelier adds a touch of glam.

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ABOVE: Designer Paula Daher at home in Boston's South End neighborhood. **LEFT:** After an extensive search, Daher found the bedroom's white-oak French doors in Atlanta. The doors were too tall for the loft, so she hired a local craftsman to renovate them to fit her space.

a “crazy search” for a pair of antique French doors to juxtapose the exposed HVAC system and trimless architecture. She found the perfect pair, which date back to the late 1700s, in Atlanta. They now close off the primary bedroom. One of Daher's favorite pieces from her previous home, a black armoire from early 1800s France, appears purpose-built for a wall just outside the kitchen. Daher sought to elevate that room—and bring in a touch of Moroccan flair—by recessing the range in a curved niche and painting the cabinets Benjamin Moore Baked Clay. A Dutch miller's table echoes the archway over the range and acts as an island.

The home's dining area, nestled near a window, manages to feel formal and informal all at once. Here Daher employs a vintage Roche Bobois marble table handed down by a beloved Back Bay neighbor. It's just one of numerous meant-to-be moments that occurred during the decorating process. The Grecian-themed wallpaper in the bedroom was another. “I



had just found the doors, and a vendor came into our office with this eclectic fabric-backed paper,” Daher recalls. “I knew I had to have it. It anchors the room, and it’s strong enough to draw your eye beyond the doors.”

Though Daher describes her new home as dramatically different from both the Back Bay and Maine residences, she nevertheless was able to find a place for many existing pieces and pair them with new objects that fill her with happiness: “This loft feels like a culmination of my life and my career.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: For details, see Resources.

INTERIOR DESIGN: Daher Interior Design
BUILDER: Prominent Builders Design & Construction



ABOVE: In the loft’s only bedroom, Grecian-themed fabric-backed paper and a powder-coated metal bed with brass fittings make an impact without overwhelming the room. **LEFT:** Next to a chair accented with trim that reminds Daher of caterpillars, perches *Mariella*, a bust Daher and her husband found on their honeymoon in Paris. “She’s not for everybody, but she makes us happy,” says the designer.