

# The House Whisperer

If you're looking to make progress on your life goals, design consultant *Olga Naiman* says don't let your living space hold you back. See how she puts her psychology-based approach to work in her own home.



In 2018, Olga and her partner, Mike Smith, were living in New York City and found themselves reassessing their own aspirations. They wanted to slow down and spend more time with their twins, Lucia and Laszlo, who were 5 at the time, plus, Olga says, “I was ready to leave the energy of the city.”

As they searched for a house, purchased one, and began renovating it for a perfect fit, the family settled into a rental (shown here), but Olga didn't want it to feel as if they were in limbo. So she used her space-planning magic to foster the life she hoped for. “My old home was very active, with lots of patterns and things to look at, but I wanted

this home to be soothing,” she says. Following the same advice she gives her clients, Olga shed almost a quarter of their belongings, literally leaving the past behind. What she brought in, she chose mindfully, seeking furnishings that would ground her family—earthy colors, low-slung silhouettes, and tons of texture. The resulting rooms feel anything but temporary, and Olga's family gets to enjoy a home that's as chic as the magazine features she styles.

Since the move, Olga has also doubled down on her design consultation business and started writing a design book. “Creating this new home was a reset button for me,” she says, proving that if you change your space, you really can change your life as well.

You might not think to meditate at work, but designer Olga Naiman placed her meditation zone near her desk to strengthen the connection between her spiritual and professional lives. She found the floor chair on Amazon and re-covered it in Schumacher's Iconic Zebra fabric.

Olga sees her living room as a place for her family to connect and replenish themselves. The deep sofa and lounge chairs create a cocooning effect, and the daybed is positioned for stargazing. She intentionally clashed the earth tones with a purple animal-print ottoman to add energy. Oversize houseplants further the link to nature, even in winter.





Because she doesn't want to introduce even subliminal negativity, Olga deliberately chooses what she describes as "positive art" and pieces that hold special meaning. On the living room gallery wall, for example, butterflies represent transformation, and the antique oil painting of an Elysian scene is meant to echo the family's new life in the country.



After years of the family piling onto a queen-size bed when the kids rush in for morning snuggles, Olga decided to splurge on a custom velvet-upholstered king. "It was a powerful choice to allow myself to have a bed where all four of us can spend Sunday mornings," she says. She also ditched her stylish but impractical bedside tables. "They had no drawers. They looked cool, but they were always a mess on top. My nightstand is the first thing I see in the morning, and I don't want to be waking up to chaos."

Olga designed her twins' bedroom to foster a sense of playfulness and humor, hence the menagerie of animals, vintage Polish circus poster, and bunny-shape table lamp. She favors vintage furniture in kids rooms for its sturdiness and built-in patina to disguise wear and tear. Local auction houses and estate sales are her top sources for affordable pieces.







## Transformative Moves to Retune a Room

things in different positions, a house will feel like new," she says. "You don't have to spend a penny."

### UPGRADE YOUR EVERYDAY ESSENTIALS

Replace things like your alarm clock and the water glass next to your bed with something you find beautiful. "These little things accentuate your self-worth," Olga says.

### BE INTENTIONAL WITH YOUR FOCAL POINT

Olga encourages clients to avoid making a TV the most attention-grabbing element in a room. "If it's really big, wallpaper around it," she suggests. A smaller TV can be put off to one side and surrounded by larger-scale accessories and artwork so it recedes. ■

**MAKE SPACE** Olga challenges her clients to take away a small percentage of the items in each room. "If you take away 10 to 30 percent of the stuff, then move

Olga picked a large, lower-level room for her office because she believes the open physical space will translate to business expansion. Likewise, the panels of Schumacher wallpaper that show the sky and the forest are intended to inspire both elevation and rootedness. Papered onto plywood, the panels can be taken with her when she moves. Of her bookcases, Olga says, "I wanted them to look organized, not just a mishmash, so I created a subtle color flow."



For Olga, every detail is an opportunity for manifestation. Here, she positioned her desk to look out onto her meditation and yoga zone, because "it always brings me back to my mission and my purpose." And she chose lush botanical upholstery fabric that "reinforces the energy of unfettered growth" to support her goals for growing her business.