

An Italian-American designer transformed this Boston home into a refined homage to historic European homes.

For her home in Boston, Italian-American designer Lisa Tharp drew inspiration from the colors and designs of the Old Continent, creating a unique and refined environment.



by Sonia S. Braga

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This distinctive red brick brownstone overlooks the Boston Public Garden and is just steps from the elegant Newbury Street neighborhood, filled with luxury boutiques, art galleries, cafes, and bars. Interior design: Lisa Tharp Design. Production: Karine Monié. Photo: Jose Manuel Alorda, courtesy of Lisa Tharp Design.

This Boston home celebrates the dialogue between classic New England architecture and the elegance of Italian villas.

The ever-brightening colors of spring enliven the avenues of the **Boston Public Garden**, the first botanical park in the **United States**. We are just steps from elegant **Newbury Street**, a neighborhood filled with luxury boutiques, cafes, bars, and art galleries. Awash in chromatic *nuances* that tickle the senses and inspire discovery, our gaze lingers on the architectural profile of **Back Bay**, one of the best-preserved examples of 19th-century urban planning. European influences are everywhere, reminiscent of adventurous journeys across the Old Continent and evocative of Paris and Rome, of **Grand Tours** with a retro charm. And it's not hard to fall in love with these tree-lined avenues with their vaguely Napoleonic atmosphere, where everything seems to fit perfectly. Designer **Lisa Tharp** and her husband, an entrepreneur and guitarist, were stunned by the scenic and architectural beauty of this neighborhood, also beloved by Hollywood. In particular, a French academic-style *brownstone* converted into a luxury residence half a century ago. «It was love at first sight, because it felt like being transported from Boston to **Rome**».



Back Bay is built almost entirely on fill (or "artificial") soil, replacing what was originally a relatively shallow bay and tidal land. Boston Brownstone. Interior design: Lisa Sharp Design. Production: Karine Monié. Photo: Jose Manuel Alorda, courtesy of Lisa Sharp Design.

Rome, Milan, Portofino...

The interior plaster moldings, rich wood coffered ceilings, and tall doors and windows overlooking the park are characteristic of **classical Italian villas and palaces**. Thus the juxtaposition of modernist interior design with classical architecture is inspired by the sophisticated apartments we had the privilege of staying in Rome, **Milan**, Florence, **Portofino**, along the coasts, and elsewhere." Lisa's family's Italian origins play an important role: the designer herself has dual citizenship, and her aesthetic references are more explicit than any theoretical discourse. "I love brownstone architecture; it reminds me of the neighborhoods of Rome (like **Parioli** and **Prati**) built in the same period and which share many of the same classical influences."



Lisa Sharp. Boston Brownstone. Interior design: Lisa Sharp Design. Production: Karine Monié. Photo: Cheryl Richards, courtesy Lisa Sharp Design.



Originally built in 1860 as a single-family home, this French Academic-style brownstone was converted into a luxury residence half a century ago. Boston Brownstone. Interior design: Lisa Tharp Design. Production: Karine Monié. Photo: Jose Manuel Alorda, courtesy of Lisa Tharp Design.



Hausmannian and contemporary Paris, along with the French academic brownstone architectural style, were sources of great inspiration for Lisa Tharp. Boston Brownstone. Interior design: Lisa Tharp Design. Production: Karine Monié. Photo: Jose Manuel Alorda, courtesy of Lisa Tharp Design.

The motivations behind this renovation were deeply personal, rooted in a desire to bridge the gap between **New England** history and European heritage. Drawing aesthetic cues from her Italian roots and her love of French culture, Lisa paid homage to the sophisticated fusion of modernist elements with historic European structures. Inside, 19th-century **French architecture** intertwines with a curated collection of 20th-century modernist artwork and European furnishings. Italian and French pieces, from Venetian chandeliers and travertine tables to **Art Deco and Brutalist accents**, create a richly textured environment that blends **Boston** 's historic character with a refined contemporary sensibility.

"I love brownstone architecture, it reminds me of the neighborhoods of Rome."

— Lisa Tharp



In the living room, the dining chairs are French from the 1940s. A table lamp by Jean Claude Mahey and a Brutalist lamp from the 1970s are from Boston Brownstone. Interior design: Lisa Tharp Design. Production: Karine Monié. Photo: Jose Manuel Alorda, courtesy of Lisa Tharp Design.



The objects in the house have been collected over time and recall the owners' European heritage and travels. The Fortuny chandelier in the living room draws the eye to the ornate plaster ceiling. Boston Brownstone. Interior design: Lisa Tharp Design. Production: Karine Monié. Photo: Jose Manuel Alorda, courtesy of Lisa Tharp Design.



Art and Interior Design: Delicate classical ornamentation juxtaposes stunning modernist elements from the Modernist, French Modern, and Art Deco movements. Boston Brownstone. Interior design: Lisa Tharp Design. Production: Karine Monié. Photo: Jose Manuel Alorda, courtesy of Lisa Tharp Design.

A collector's approach

With the clear intention of preserving and enhancing the structure and style of this Boston architectural gem, it was necessary to transcend the insensitive renovations of the past, incorporate flexible functionality into a relatively small space, and balance the delicate decorations with **elegant, slender silhouettes**. In other words, to highlight the designer and her studio's collector-like approach through gradual and continuous work, carefully incorporating new elements in keeping with the authentic spirit of the renovation.



The custom pieces are handcrafted with non-toxic materials, and the vintage pieces are carefully restored. Eco-friendly finishes such as Lisa Sharp Colors X ECOS Paints are used throughout. Boston Brownstone. Interior design: Lisa Sharp Design. Production: Karine Monié. Photo: Jose Manuel Alorda, courtesy of Lisa Sharp Design.

The goal was to restore this 1,200-square-foot Boston home to its former beauty. "We replaced the uninspired cabinets flanking the study fireplace with an elegant pair of doors, **crown moldings** , and bronze doorknobs that recall the home's earlier history. We also removed the lowered ceilings, likely added during the 1970s energy crisis, which completely obscured the beautiful decorative ceilings throughout the rooms."



Inside designer Lisa Tharp's private residence, 19th-century French architecture intertwines with a curated collection of 20th-century modernist artwork and European furnishings. Boston Brownstone. Interior design: Lisa Tharp Design. Production: Karine Monié. Photo: Jose Manuel Alorda, courtesy of Lisa Tharp Design.



Italian and French pieces—from Venetian chandeliers and travertine tables to Art Deco and Brutalist accents—create a richly textured space that blends Boston's historic character with a refined contemporary European sensibility. Boston Brownstone. Interior design: Lisa Tharp Design. Production: Karine Monié. Photo: Jose Manuel Alorda, courtesy Lisa Tharp Design.



"I've always admired the sophisticated Italian fusion of modernist elements with historical structures," says Lisa. "This apartment shares the architectural language of 19th-century Rome, so I can express that inspiration here." Boston Brownstone. Interior design: Lisa Tharp Design. Production: Karine Monié. Photo: Jose Manuel Alorda, courtesy Lisa Tharp Design.

The material palette is a balanced mix of light and dark, hard and soft, polished and textured, old and new. **Vintage elements**, such as lighting and hardware, are faithful to the brownstone's ever-evolving history. The effect is timeless, as if the details and furnishings were collected over the years, while contemporary additions lend a fresh feel. Lisa's chosen color palette deserves special mention. The silvery neutral of the main spaces changes beautifully with the natural light that varies throughout the day. The hue highlights the lighter decorative plaster without introducing excessive contrast. The effect is airy and relaxing. "The rich colors of **Siena** were the inspiration for the Studio's palette, which features a dark mahogany coffered ceiling," explains the designer.



A detail of the stucco in the living room. In the background, one of the three fireplaces. Boston Brownstone. Interior design: Lisa Tharp Design. Production: Karine Monié. Photo: Jose Manuel Alorda, courtesy of Lisa Tharp Design.

In this Boston home, lines are clean, whether they involve a chair or a custom-designed lampshade. Everything appears functional: every element, large or small, serves a specific function and earns an important place in the overall concept. A touch of Italy: in the bedroom, the Palazzo bed is a custom creation from the **Lisa Tharp Collection** , a streamlined and minimalist version of the four-poster beds found in Italian Villas. The pair of 18th-century oval-back chairs is upholstered in Venetian silk velvet. In the living room, the chandelier is a **Fortuny** , the velvet sofa bed next to the fireplace is by **Ralph Pucci** , the 1962 articulated lamp is by **Goffredo Reggiani** , the Italian coffee table is from the 1970s, and the travertine table is a clear example of Italian vintage.



"The structure was built in the French Academic style, popularized by Baron Haussmann's reorganization of Paris for Napoleon III," explains Lisa. "This style emphasized classical symmetry, large scale, and ornate decorations with columns, sculptures, and elaborate details." Boston Brownstone. Interior design: Lisa Tharp Design. Production: Karine Monié. Photo: Jose Manuel Alorda, courtesy of Lisa Tharp Design.

And a lot of France: 1940s dining chairs by Maison **André Arbus** adorn the living room, as do the **Jean Claude Mahey** table lamp over the dining table and the 1970s Brutalist lamp. In the study, the polished walnut desk and chair are in 1930s French Art Deco style, the vintage wall light is by **Maison Arlus** , and the ottoman is upholstered in a French silk blend. How does Lisa Tharp describe her new home? Her ability to synthesize is dazzling: "It's a designer's modernist interpretation of her own historic apartment, creating an artistic, sophisticated, and timeless place to call home."



The Palazzo bed took full advantage of the 4-meter-high ceiling. It's a contemporary take on the proportions of the four-poster beds found in the grand palaces of Venice or Versailles. Boston Brownstone. Interior design: Lisa Tharp Design. Production: Karine Monié. Photo: Jose Manuel Alorda, courtesy of Lisa Tharp Design.