

# QC

March 2017

EXCLUSIVE

## THE DESIGN ISSUE

Inside NFL star Greg Olsen's home, Heirloom Companies' craftsmanship, Treehouse Masters' owl library, Mudwerk's wall art, and a peek into the spaces that mean the most to Charlotte's best interior designers



# IN GOOD COMPANY

Beth Keim of Lucy and Company uses pieces that matter to create spaces you'll want to live in.

*interview by* COREY MILLER  
*photos of Lucy & Co. spaces by* MEKENZIE LOLI  
*portraits and studio photos by* JAMEY PRICE

LUCY AND COMPANY FOUNDER BETH KEIM'S DESIGNS THRIVE ON NEUTRALS. But her definition of neutral is, at times, boldly far-reaching. She avoids oversaturation with color when possible but, under the umbrella of the Charlotte design firm she founded, Lucy and Company, she isn't satisfied until she fits a good chunk of the spectrum into her designs. In other words Beth likes color when she likes it in the same way that she works with naturals and metals when she feels like doing so. Like anyone creative, she goes through what she calls "moods." Her design style is always fluctuating and always evolving, ensuring that no two of her works are the same. Her gift for creating, thankfully, isn't squandered on any one single style. She's always changing, which is what defines her talent. The crisp cool of natural light is key: It gives a contemporary space much of its vitality, all the while accentuating the pure cleanliness of the home. The other pops of life are injected into the home's living areas by the art, of course, which is all precisely placed to wake up certain areas.

"Sometimes I wish everyone would slow down, and create a space they'll really enjoy."



## COME ON IN

Six Charlotte interior designers welcome us into their homes for a behind-the-scenes look at the spaces that matter the most.

*words by* SUNNY HUBLER

### BETH KEIM'S LIVING ROOM

*photo by* MEKENZIE LOLI

DESIGNER BETH KEIM'S HOUSE ON BELVEDERE AVENUE IN PLAZA MIDWOOD is a stately Georgian Revival built in 1921 and renovated in 2004 and again in 2015. Beth's newest design emphasizes a calming black and white color scheme paired with streamlined furniture. Her living room, once a more formal space, is now a casual area that Beth says she and her family can use all the time. Warm fabrics and distressed leathers give the space an aged feel offset by the white walls and the vintage two-sided desk, a gorgeous find from Slate Interiors in Charlotte. Additions like this desk are what Beth calls "pieces that matter, that make a space your own."



Clockwise from top-left: Beth Keim, her studio Lucy and Company, one of her favorite spaces in her home, fabric samples in her studio.

HOW HAS YOUR DAUGHTER LUCY INFLUENCED THE COMPANY?

I was 36 and I really wanted a baby, and I was sick of waiting around. I brought her back from China and met my husband two weeks later. How funny is that? In a paint store,

no doubt. At the time I started all this, she was little, we were focusing on kids rooms, and I just thought it was a cool name. Lucy's amazing. She's very organized, and purposeful. It still fits us.

WHAT DROVE YOU TO ART AND DESIGN IN THE FIRST PLACE?

I think I came by it naturally. My grandmother was very artistic, and my great aunt was one of the first designers ever licensed in New York and Florida. I think you're born with that visual eye. You either have that or you don't. It's a hard thing to learn. I majored in art, but took a lot of business classes as well because I wanted a fall-back, and it's paid off.

IS THERE ANY ONE THING THAT INFORMED YOUR EARLIEST DESIGNS AND BLEEDS INTO ALL OF YOUR DESIGNS NOW?

I've never tired of pattern on pattern on pattern. I love to mix different patterns and wallpapers, rugs and leathers, twigs and feathers, on top of each other. And I love wallpapers. Back in the day people would say "Ew, wallpaper?!" Trends have changed, but I've always loved wallpaper.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE DRASTIC CHANGES YOU'VE SEEN IN YOUR OWN DESIGN EFFORTS OVER THE YEARS?

My style has evolved. It really has. I used to be a very color-saturated kind of designer—color, color, color. And then about a year and a half ago (when I redid my own house), I started shifting to things a lot calmer and cleaner—blacks and whites and tans, because it was more soothing to me. The color—too much of it—was stressing me out.

“Anything mass-produced is a thorn in my side.”



HOW DID YOU GET YOUR START IN DESIGN?

Back in 1998, I had just gotten back from China where I adopted my six-month-old daughter, Lucy. So right after I found Lucy, I started hand-painting walls and furniture back when faux-finishing was all the rage. I did that for a couple years until I met my husband, who is also an artist—he wasn't my husband then. [laughs] He and I joined forces and started doing it together. I was a little older than him, though, and I got tired of doing all that painting—I finally said, “why don't you take over that side of the business and I'll start doing a little more with interiors?”

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO CREATE THAT SIDE OF THE BUSINESS?

I was always in clients' houses, thinking, “This faux-finish is great and this paintwork is great, but you need some new stuff to go with it.” I don't have any design school training, but I've always been obsessed with visuals. Back then, I focused on upscale kids' rooms because it was a niche. Nobody really did it. Then I'd walk past their living room and decide they needed a new sofa. So it evolved from kids' rooms to adult spaces. Fast-forward 16 years and we moved over to East Boulevard, bought the building, and it got bigger and bigger. So here we are.



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“Whatever is coming through the window is part of your color scheme and part of your art—green, to me, is a neutral.”



I'M ALSO CURIOUS ABOUT ALL OF THE SKELETAL ITEMS. DO YOU HAVE A FASCINATION WITH BONES?

Not really. The skull thing is probably trendy, but at the moment I'm digging it. Being married to an artist and having graduated from art school myself, I think art is so key. For some reason nature always plays a big part in what I try to do. Whatever's coming through the window is part of your color scheme and part of your art—green, to me, is a neutral. Plants and vegetation can go anywhere with any color. But I am obsessed with hides and feathers currently. Any natural element works really well with this clean, black-and-white-and-leather look.

SO YOU'RE BLENDING NEUTRALS WITH NATURALS?

My mood changes. I have these phases, just like anyone. [Pointing to images of a "canopied" ceiling in a bedroom] This is my daughter's room. She's obsessed with nature. She's a big camper. My other daughter is the exact opposite: Lucy collects comic books and wants to be Batman. [laughs] Her room is all black and white. She's even got a little office here [in the East Boulevard showroom] because this is Lucy and Company, after all.

WHAT DOES A DESIGN MOST NEED?

Lighting is crucial. There's nothing worse than a boring fan with a light in it: It's the first thing I try to yank out of a room. Lighting sets a tone, it sets the mood. Low lighting is so important. Your floor is your fifth wall, your ceiling can be your fifth wall. Don't neglect them.

WHAT KINDS OF CHANGES, EITHER IN INDUSTRY TRENDS OR YOUR OWN DESIGNS, DO YOU SEE COMING?

I would have to see what inspires me next, and I could find it in a floor, in a single tile.

YOU'RE CONSTANTLY SEARCHING, RIGHT?

I'm always finding things. I just think what bothers me more than anything is the regurgitation. Anything mass-produced is a thorn in my side. [laughs] Now, I know some people don't care, and they have other things that are important in their lives. They just want a sofa and a rug and a TV and a bed and they're happy. But for me...I like the hunt. Sometimes I wish everyone would slow down and create a space they'll really enjoy.

HOW DO WE CREATE THAT SPACE?

You find things that are going to matter, that are different, that your neighbors aren't going to have, that make you a little more unique. I have a love/hate relationship with the internet. I love that I can find what I'm looking for, but you know—we see the same thing over and over and it gets stuck in the brain and we think that thing is what we have to do. You may come to me and say, "I saw this room you did, and I want that." But you don't want that, really, because that's theirs. Don't you want something that's yours?

★ For a bit more info: [lucyandcompany.com](http://lucyandcompany.com)

Beth Keim's living space blends natural wood and leather with pops of metallic and her classic neutral palette.

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