

# Chatting With Interior Design Maven Tracy Morris On A Space 200 Years In The Making

By Natalie Leinbach | March 27, 2020 | [Home & Real Estate](#)

Tracy Morris uses her residential design aesthetic to create new restaurant and bar spaces in town.



*The design of Lupo Verde Osteria features exposed brick and a whitewashed tile bar.*

Lupo Verde Osteria, tucked away in the Palisades neighborhood in Northwest, is one of those intimate spaces that's not trying too hard—aesthetically or on the menu—and yet manages to win over patrons immediately. Guests will find six housemade pastas and a sophisticated wine menu, among other surprises. Across town at the historic Willard InterContinental is another quiet gem: The Round Robin Bar has been serving drinks next to the White House since 1847. The bar's signature drink, the mint julep, is a mix of Maker's Mark bourbon, mint and turbinado sugar.

Tracy Morris designed the new Osteria and reimagined Red Robin. We recently sat down with her to get a read on her inspiration for these decidedly different spaces.

**Your career has been in residential design. What's the impetus behind doing commercial spaces?**

One of the main rewards for designing this type of space is to see everyone enjoying it. The best part is when you're able to see a room you created come to life and function well. The challenge in designing a commercial space is pleasing all the different parties involved. With a public space like The Round Robin Bar, you need to please the owner of the hotel, the finance team and all of the patrons.

**Where did you get the inspiration for Lupo Verde Osteria?**

This restaurant was so much fun to complete. The inspiration came from the amazing food and the building's structure. The walls of exposed brick and modern Italian cuisine set the scene for the whitewashed tile bar and soft leather banquettes.

There are many aspects of Osteria that reflect my personal style: the handscraped floors, the strong wood tables, the buttery Moore & Giles leather banquettes, the ombre Zoffany velvet fabric on the seat back—I just love all of those items.

**And The Round Robin Bar—what aspects of this space are you especially proud of?**

I love the wallcovering. It was a risk to use this type of specialty material in a public space. In this instance, the wallpaper was made of glass beads. When the wallpaper was installed and the lights were turned on, the whole room glowed. Such a proud moment!

The influence of this design was 200 years in the making. Not many people know, but both Walt Whitman and Abraham Lincoln sat at this bar. I channeled all the people who had been there before and what I knew the space wanted to be. It's a space wanting to keep its history and influence while welcoming a new generation.



*A leather banquette at The Round Robin Bar at the Willard InterContinental.*

### **How do you balance your clients' preferences with your own personal flair?**

It's my job to be the client's design guide, not take over the design preference. Since we typically help our clients build their homes from the ground up, if a client is leaning into a decision that will cause problems for them later—high-maintenance building materials, silk fabrics with small children, lamps that are out of proportion, wall colors that are too dark—I'll advise against those items and provide an alternative.