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# Happy Ours

DESIGNER SUMMER  
THORNTON'S  
EXUBERANT TAKE  
ON COLOR AND  
PATTERN AWAKENS  
A 1925 HOME TO  
LIGHTHEARTED  
LIVING



**BEFORE** While the living room walls were lightened with gingham wallpaper, the formerly white fireplace was painted black as a moody counterpoint.



To fully appreciate Tina Pregont's intense love for color, it helps to understand her roots. "I grew up in a house where everything was blue," she says. "I've always loved bold, bright color. Blue, pink, red, green—it's my happy."

Yet Tina, "who shows up at our office dressed all in pink and whom I've seen wear black exactly once," Chicago-based designer Summer Thornton says, hasn't always lived in a candy-color house. "The last time we decorated, about 30 years ago, everything was dark and heavy," Tina says. "We had a lot of burgundy and jade. That was the look at the time, and I absolutely loved it."

Fast-forward nearly three decades, and Tina's Janesville, Wisconsin, home—where she and husband Joe raised three kids (after, as newlyweds, gutting the interior of their 1925 house and doubling its size)—became less an object of her affection and more a symbol of her newfound desire for a simpler way of living. "I wanted to downsize to a condo," she says. "I wanted one small space that would be easy to deal with."

With a trio of other homes—a nearby lake house Thornton had just decorated in Tina's favorite brights, a hunting lodge not too far away, and a place for the family to gather in Naples, Florida—Tina was ready to pare down her daily existence.

Not so for Joe, who wanted their kids, all of whom live just blocks away, to be able to return to the home they'd grown up in with their own young children in tow. "He made me a deal and asked if I'd stay here if we had Summer come do her magic," Tina says. "I shook his hand and said 'Sold!' It was a no-brainer."

Soon enough, a kitchen wall came down. Fireplace surrounds were updated; bathroom vanities were replaced. Out went the multilayer draperies, the wall-to-wall carpet, and the tassels,

**Living room** A bright yet thoughtfully shaped palette rooted in blue hues unites an energetic mix of patterns. Créations Métaphores fabric covers the Bunny Williams Home nailhead sofa. **Preceding pages** A pair of J Marshall Design chairs and a silver-leaf table from Bunny Williams Home furnish a quiet corner of the living room. Vintage botanical prints and Spoonflower gingham wallcovering contribute verve.







trims, and fringes. In fact, out went nearly every piece of furniture in the house. “We started over completely,” Thornton says. “This house was going to be light and fresh.” And without a doubt, it was going to be layered with color and pattern.

“You’re either a pattern person or you’re not,” Thornton says. “Tina is definitely a pattern person.” So are Thornton and designer Whitney Mersman, who collaborated on the interiors.

“Living with color and pattern is so much easier than living with neutrals,” Mersman says. “It’s very forgiving. Tina and Joe have two dogs and three grandchildren. I promise you this works well with pet hair and spit-up!”

The designers’ more-the-merrier aesthetic, however, is hardly haphazard. In fact, while exuberant, it’s the result of a carefully considered approach.

With the great room’s blue wallpaper as the reference point to which all color decisions eventually tied back, Thornton and Mersman focused on playing with ethnic patterns to make their layered approach feel fresh rather than fussy. Indian block prints and embroidered Turkish florals ranging from aqua to teal are vibrant nods to Tina and Joe’s lifetime of world travels—and hallmarks of an inspired twist on tradition.

To ensure rooms retain their timeless feel, they’re anchored by large furniture pieces that feature both classic silhouettes and similarly toned fabrics. This unites the many patterns at play—nine in the great room alone.

“It also allowed us to spread smaller pops of color around with rugs and accessories that don’t necessarily match anything—without making the house feel outrageously wild,” Mersman says.

Formal damasks were traded for casual linens, cottons, and hemp that further relax the new design. A broad mix of vintage and antique side tables, benches, and lighting lends a collected-over-time feel. Papered and painted walls—including the great room’s oversize paisley, graphic gingham checks in the living room, and cheerful stripes in the entry hall—embrace it all.

“We love pattern on walls,” Thornton says. “It adds an extra layer of coziness and comfort. Plus, if there’s any excuse to get another pattern in a room, we’ll take it!”

**Breakfast room** A built-in window seat is covered in a Perennials indoor-outdoor black-and-white stripe. The antique dining table is from 1stdibs. **Homeowners** Tina and Joe Pregont. **Exterior** The Pregonts bought their 1925 house as newlyweds.

**BEFORE**  
Designer Summer Thornton enlivened the once-dark breakfast and dining rooms with happy color.





PUTTING PATTERNS TOGETHER  
IS LIKE PUTTING TOGETHER  
PUZZLE PIECES. YOU GET A  
FEELING WHEN YOU'VE GOT  
THEM IN PLACE.”

—designer Summer Thornton









Dining room walls wear a jewel-like lacquer finish from Fine Paints of Europe. "This is a room for evening, so we wanted it to feel darker and more intimate," Thornton says. Antique Warehouse chairs surround a vintage table from Grinard Collection. The vintage 1stdibs cabinet displays Tina's wedding china. Dining chairs are cloaked in John Rosselli paisley; custom head chairs wear Holland & Sherry upholstery.





The perfect client for the pair's playful tendencies, Tina—or "Tina Fabulous," as Thornton and Mersman refer to her—never hesitated. "I admire the way they mix things up," Tina says. "They're not afraid to be out there, and I love it."

Almost, it seems, as much as the house she once thought she was ready to leave. "This is a happy place meant for lots of fun," Tina says. "Now that it's updated, my hope is that one of our kids sees their future in it with their family. Fingers crossed!" ❧

**Interior designers:** Summer Thornton and Whitney Mersman

**For more information, see sources on page 117**

**Great room** Forest green walls were traded for fresh blue Schumacher wallpaper. The vintage flat-weave rug hails from ABC Carpet & Home. Silver leaf accentuates a Currey & Company chair; the carved chest from 1stdibs and the mirror are vintage. **Master bedroom** Previously swathed in red and carpeted in brown, the bedroom underwent perhaps the biggest transformation. Thornton repeated a single Cowtan & Tout fabric on the bed, drapery panels, and bench to calm the pattern-filled space. The bed is by Ferrell Mittman.