

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Ebullient pattern and color enliven a family's beloved 19th century abode.

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Interior Design: Summer Thornton, Summer Thornton Design, Inc.



A

few years back, designer Summer Thornton noticed some exciting developments coming from across the pond—the U.K., to be exact. So, she hopped on a plane. She and her team visited stalwarts like

Sir John Soane’s Museum and the V&A, stayed in a Kit Kemp hotel, and checked out Annabel’s (a personal highlight). “We came back, and our joke was no more white,” she laughs. As luck would have it, Thornton was starting a project with her “design soul sister”—a client with a love for homey spaces, who wanted to bring some color and pattern into her life.

The client was embarking on a next-phase renovation of her 1896 abode. Some 15 years before, she and her husband had purchased the place and called on architects Jeff Harting and John Toniolo to renovate. “A lot of people had lived there, and everyone had done something to it,” the wife recalls. “The living room had Roman columns and a dropped ceiling with fluorescent lighting, there was a Southwest motif in the family room and the kitchen was encased in a glass cage.” Harting says he and Toniolo “approached the structure as a blank slate, gutting the interior and restoring the historic shell.” Adding a bit of splendor, they opened rooms to one another, installed large, cased openings, recreated the staircase and crafted “bigger, more voluptuous” moldings and millwork.

Three children later, the owners turned to Harting and Toniolo once again. The plan was to keep much of the past renovation intact but make a few changes based on their current lifestyle. An expanded mudroom accommodates the gear a family of five accumulates. In the kitchen, a few savvy moves made the space seem larger, although the square footage stayed the same. New cabinets and crown moldings run up to the ceiling, giving the illusion of greater height. Removing a nook made things feel more spacious, while widening the opening between the kitchen and the family room enhanced the connection between the two spaces. “They’re still separate,” says the wife,

“but they talk to each other better.” Finally, the architects crafted an sun room addition that serves as a study. “We did a skylight, so it’s lighter and airier than the main structure,” explains Harting. “It feels like a conservatory.”

“It wasn’t just the family’s functional needs that had evolved. When we first did the house, I was going to be a new mom, so it was quiet, neutral, soothing with lots of sisal, texture and art versus color,” says the client. “Now I wanted it to be fun, eclectic and cool.” Enter Thornton. “Summer can mix things, and they just work. Sometimes I don’t think she’s consciously doing it. It’s just part of her natural process,” the client explains, pointing to the blue-and-white wallcovering in a tight pattern in her bedroom. The design plays off the blue floral print visible in the bathroom. Nearby, in the dressing room, is “a complete Madeleine Castaing moment,” says Thornton—complete with wallpaper and a vanity chair in gold coverings festooned with ribbons, feathers and bouquets of flowers. “It’s so tiny it doesn’t seem ostentatious,” says the designer. “There’s a 1940s glamour to it.”

Thornton’s skill in tying pattern and color together is perhaps clearest in the family room and study. “Because the family room is a connection point, we wanted the main portions to feel neutral, so the walls are white and we made bigger statements in the upholstery,” she says. There’s a tiger-print couch—a request from the client who admired one Thornton had in her office—a sofa in goldenrod and a plumed rug. The blue and gold hues (the client’s favorite colors) link the space to the new study, which sports a wallcovering of deep blue, hand-applied burlap. “It ties the room together and gives it a textural depth,” says Thornton. “I like a darker endpoint to draw you in the space. It’s a bold statement that, when paired correctly, feels effortless.”

Working with the client resonated with Thornton beyond just their shared aesthetic sensibility. “We were making this nostalgic family home, and that’s something I wanted to put in my own home as well,” she says. “She set me on the path of creating these charming, rambling family spaces full of joy and life.” ■



Designer Summer Thornton set a playful foundation in the foyer of this Chicago home with a mix of patterns and color thanks to a wallcovering from Holly Hunt, a blue-and-gold vintage rug and a floral ottoman. For architects Jeff Harting and John Toniolo, the project was a return engagement—they were called upon for a second round of renovations.



Right: The architects' scope of work included an addition that looks out to the garden and serves as study, complete with an ebonized Louis XVI style desk acquired via 1stdibs and balloon back chair. Artist Anna Wolfson applied burlap to the walls by hand for a dynamic textural finish.

Opposite: Hanging from the skylight above, a chandelier from Artisan Lamp (based in Washington, D.C.) illuminates a Sally King Benedict painting in the study. The Nobilis fabric on the pair of custom ottomans pops against Schumacher's Carlotta velvet damask on the custom sofa and the Moore & Giles leather on the armchair.





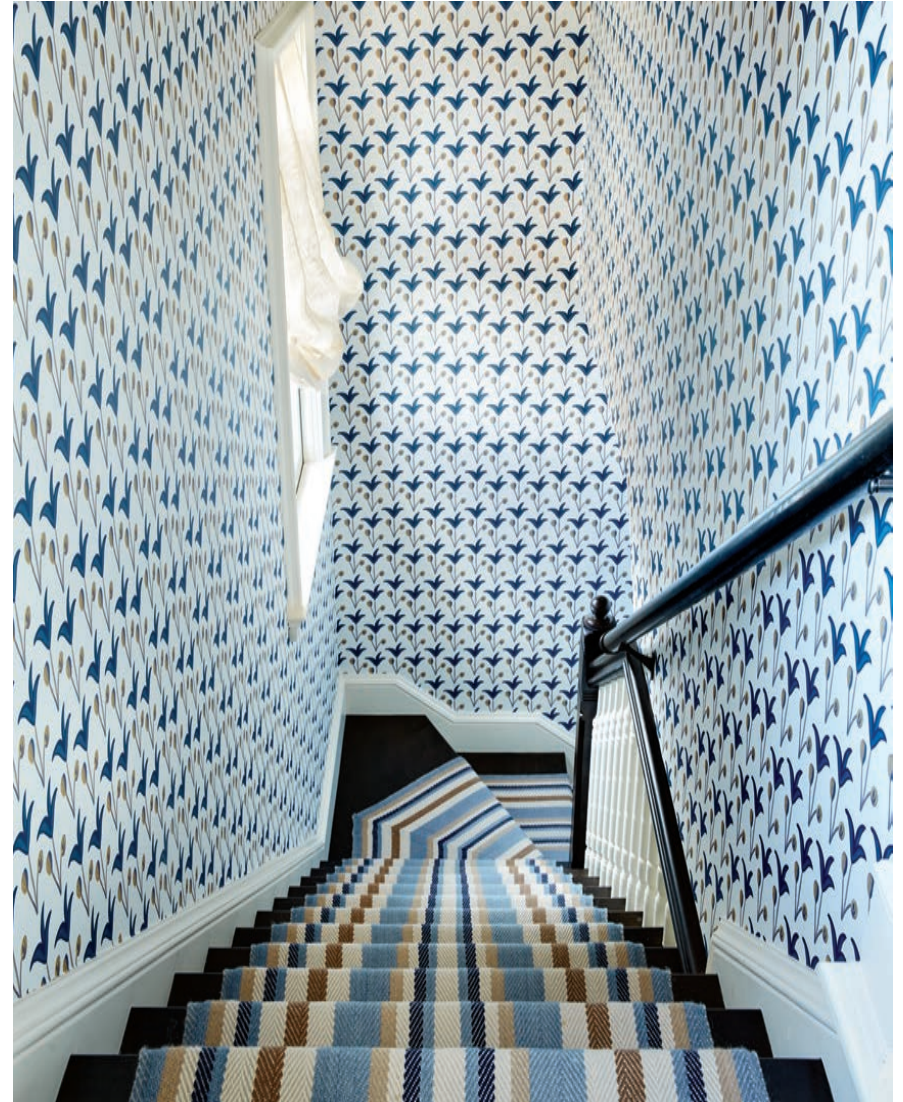
Above: Rather than completely rethinking the kitchen, the architects retained some of the layout and cabinetry while tweaking certain elements such as the island, which is now topped with butcher block. [There's a new, fresher life breathed into it], says Harting. A custom RangeCraft hood is mounted above the Viking range.

Opposite: [We added the Michael S. Smith wallpaper to give the kitchen some depth], says Thornton. The client appreciates modern touches, so Thornton incorporated barstools from Haute Living with chrome details and white patent leather Fabricrit upholstery. Shining from above is a fixture by The Urban Electric Co.



Left: "The fabric makes the room," Thornton says of Madeleine covering the walls and vanity seat in the wife's dressing room. "It's a jewel-box moment." The mirror is from John Rosselli & Associates and underfoot is an antique Chinese zodiac rug.

Opposite: "You can live with young kids, teens and dogs and still make it chic, happy and pretty," notes Thornton, who ensured even the home's less visible spaces brimmed with vibrant personality. For the back stair hall, she selected an Ottoline wallcovering to complement the clients' runner.





Above: A pair of Vaughan mirrors hang against Chambord Place's delicate Bengal Rose wallcovering in the main bath, which the designer describes as fun and lighthearted with a British quirkiness. [It was all white before, so we flipped the script with the blue trim and gave it a lot of energy,] she observes.

Opposite: Thanks in large part to the wallcovering from Anthony Inc. Design Solutions and a headboard by Barron Custom Furniture, the client calls her bedroom a [completely enveloping space.] Thornton used a silk velvet on the Bunny Williams Home sofa specifically since it would crush and wear with time and use, creating a charming patina.

