



COLOR, COLOR, COLOR!

# PRETTY POISED HAPPY

“COOL BLUES,  
GREENS, AND GRAYS HAVE  
A LOVELY SOFTNESS”



In the living room of a Greenwich, Connecticut, house, designer Ashley Whittaker created a cozy spot for two with a pair of the homeowners' favorite chairs and a Currey & Company Circe bench. **OPPOSITE:** Walls painted Benjamin Moore's Stonington Gray provide a cool, neutral background for the Karen Connell photograph and the fresh blues and greens in the room. Hanna chairs by Oly are covered in Mark Alexander's Cartouche Tay print and Fortuny's Tapa. Bone inlay coffee table, Ashley Whittaker Design. Trellis rug, Mansour Modern.



FRANCESCO LAGNESE





JAMES MERRELL

**HILARY ROBERTSON: How did the architecture of this new house influence the colors you chose?**

ASHLEY WHITTAKER: The scale of the windows that Judith Larson designed made it feel like such a happy, serene environment. Light just floods these rooms. The cool blues, greens, and grays have a lovely softness that lends itself to the atmosphere of the entire house. There's also a beautiful flow to the floor plan—you look through one room to another. As soon as you enter the foyer, you get little glimpses of many spaces at once. So I had to create an equivalent flow of colors. They all had to play well together.

**Were these also colors that appealed to the client?**

As it turned out, they did. When I was hired, they told me they wanted a house with comfortable rooms for the family and formal rooms where they could entertain. So the wife and I went through more than 100 tear sheets of interiors she had collected. She was concerned that there was no consistent message in what she was looking for, but it soon became obvious that she loved an overall fresh approach to decorating and cool colors—especially pale blues.

**So once you realized that, you were on your way.**

We went to work right away incorporating everything from spring green and turquoise to olive and blue-gray. One of the first rooms we did was the downstairs family room. She really responded to it, so it set the tone for the watery blues you see throughout the house. We knew we wanted to lacquer the living room walls a cool gray, so we started in there. It provides a neutral background against which the furniture and artwork can really shine. The blue-gray silk velvet on the sofa and the bright green accents make the room feel alive and inviting. We carried blues and greens into the sunroom, since the two rooms open to each other. The rooms look great together, although they don't match. Each room in the house stands alone, but there's also a harmonious flow.

**Is that actually trellis on the sunroom walls?**

Yes. We designed the whole room around it. I think of the sunroom as a playful version of the more serious living room. Trellis was initially used strictly for garden design, but Elsie de Wolfe is credited with bringing it indoors in the early 1900s at the Colony Club in New York City. I love it because it creates the sense of an outdoor space. On a drab winter day you can be in there and feel like you're in a beautiful garden. It also adds personality and whimsy and architectural interest. This happens to be real, but I also love a trellis paper.

**There's an awful lot of pattern in this house.**

This house is so spacious, it could easily take big doses of it. Pattern adds color and the kind of layers that are so important. It keeps a room from feeling so matchy-matchy and gives it a more lived-in look. I always tell clients not to be scared of pattern. They'll look at six-by-six-inch swatches tightly clustered on a table and say, 'Oooh, wow... that seems like a lot.' Of course I juxtaposed small-scale and large-scale patterns and interspersed them with solids and neutrals.

**There's also a healthy dose of sparkly surfaces—metallic accents, lacquered walls—that have a glamorous, fashion-forward air about them. Is your client a snappy dresser?**

Oh yes, but in a totally casual, low-key way. I think the sparkle was both of our alter egos coming out through decorating. It's subtle, and yet it still has a way of catching your eye and adding interest without feeling too formal. We used it in a tailored way, which I think is what makes it stand out. There's shimmery silk wallcovering on the master bedroom walls that's so elegant and sophisticated, backsplash tiles in the kitchen that just glow, and a reflective metal-leaf wallcovering on the dining room ceiling.

**Did you ever worry that it would all feel too feminine?**

No, because there are quite a lot of browns and cognacs here, too. The walls of her office, in fact, are covered with brown grass cloth, although we did use pink accents. In the upstairs family room, those earthier colors give a feeling of warmth and coziness that's a total contrast to the airiness of the living room. The dining room walls are brown lacquer painted over with a bronze vine. And the oval dining table is mahogany.

**Do you use much brown furniture in your projects? Hasn't it become rather unfashionable?**

Funny you should mention it. I've never been a big fan, but I feel myself moving more and more in that direction. A piece of brown furniture, old or new, really grounds a room and mixes nicely with a multitude of furniture styles, from antique to modern.

**What's your favorite thing about the project?**

My client called me a few weeks ago, after her first dinner party. She said it was a magical evening, with guests enjoying everything from watching sports on TV in the family room, to congregating at the kitchen island, to drinking cocktails by the fire. The whole house flowed perfectly. But she added: 'The only problem was, no one would leave!' I can't imagine a bigger compliment.

PRODUCED BY DORETTA SPERDUTO

**LEFT:** Whittaker linked the sunroom to the living room with blues and greens in different but harmonious hues. For a garden feel, she had latticework applied to walls painted Pantone's Young Wheat. X-benches from Ballard Designs are covered in Kathryn M. Ireland's Casablanca. Wicker lounge chair, Bielecky Brothers. Montana rug, Cornell Carpet and Design.





1. Terre Cuite tile from Paris Ceramics shimmers like mother-of-pearl next to the white cabinetry in the kitchen, and Urban Electric's Chisholm Hall lanterns add a splash of color. 2. In the wife's office, pink lamps by Christopher Spitzmiller stand out against brown grass cloth by Winfield Thybony. 3. The bar's Aladdin tile from Waterworks conjures up an exotic Moroccan feel. 4. Little jolts of orange punctuate the beiges and pale blues in the family room. 5. Cole and Son's Woods wallcovering from Lee Jofa gives the small powder room big personality. 6. A pair of Currey & Company Circe benches stored under a Circolo console from Niermann Weeks can serve as extra seating in the living room. **OPPOSITE:** Whittaker wanted to use Chinese scenic wallpaper in the dining room, but the client was afraid it would be too much pattern. "We met in the middle," she says, "and got decorative painter Agustin Hurtado to embellish chocolate-lacquered walls with a bronze vine." Metal Leaf Ingot wallcovering from Surfaces by David Bonk adds a glamorous sheen to the ceiling. Custom dining chairs upholstered in Metallic Dream Cow by Edelman Leather and antiqued gilt lanterns from Holly Hunt amplify the glow.



JAMES MERRELL





AMERICA'S  
FAVORITE PAINT  
COLOR

WE LOVE  
TO SLEEP IN BLUE  
BEDROOMS—  
THEY WERE FAR  
AND AWAY  
THE #1 CHOICE  
IN OUR SURVEY

See page 38  
for full results!



“Lavender has a whole new point of view when it’s mixed with turquoise and navy. It says ‘girl’ without screaming ‘girly girl.’”

ASHLEY WHITTAKER

LEFT: Whittaker wanted the bedroom for her client’s college-age daughter to feel sophisticated, but still youthful and feminine. She upholstered the bed in Suzzani by Quadrille and dressed it in Matouk Mirasol bedding. An Ava mirrored nightstand from Worlds Away holds a Genevieve table lamp from Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams. Walls are painted Mountain Mist by Benjamin Moore.

JAMES MERRELL





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Soft blues lend an inviting calmness to the master bedroom's sitting area. Whittaker used Galbraith & Paul's Tulip for the Roman shades and ottoman. The Nina Campbell Rondell rug is from Stark Carpet. **OPPOSITE:** The subtle sheen and texture of the Star Dust Silk wallcovering by Phillip Jeffries imparts a quiet elegance. Curtains in Scalamandré's Bonard frame a shade in Carleton V's Sophie Sheer. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES