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ode to joy

ARMED WITH A VIVID PALETTE AND AN APPETITE FOR RISK, A YOUNG DESIGNER CREATES A FANCIFUL LAKESIDE GETAWAY IN CHICAGO.



Assertive prints, vivid brights, and soft neutrals balance the living room's intensely blue walls, *this photo*. In the kitchen, *opposite*, anemones bloom in a vintage Fornasetti vase.

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or their summertime escape from Florida's heat, the couple didn't want a quiet getaway. They wanted something bold in Chicago, a city filled with art, culture, great restaurants, and, as luck would have it, a young designer named Summer Thornton.

Known for her juiced-up, colorful take on traditional design, Thornton is "bold and completely fearless," says R. Michael Graham, the architect on the project. Not everyone has the vision to imagine that a 1929 luxury building on Lake Shore Drive might benefit from liberal applications of vibrant color and wild color pairings, but Thornton took

the couple's adventurousness and ran with it. "They wanted something really fun, really vibrant. What I thought was great about them was that they didn't seem to care about what they should do. They did what they wanted to do," Thornton says.

When the wife used the word *happy* to describe what she had in mind, Thornton turned to modern art—particularly that of Miró and Matisse—and street fashion to find intense colors in unexpected color combinations. "Artists tend to be much freer in their use of color," says Thornton, who used many unusual pairings, including bright blue and ruby red, celery green

Dignified brass sconces, below, provide a counterweight to playful elements, including four Miró lithographs from 1975.



In lieu of a formal dining room, the couple opted for a deconstructed space featuring a table suitable for guests at one end, *this photo*, and a cozy banquette for two at the other, *opposite*. Wallpaper in a delicate chinoiserie pattern unites the wide-open space.

The living room walls showcase an amped-up version of the blue of Lake Michigan, which fills the view from the tall windows. The lacquered white ceiling, featuring an early-20th-century Murano glass chandelier, bounces light from the water into the room.



Inspired by a Rothko painting in intense vermilion and cotton candy pink, the bedroom features multiple layers and textures of these two colors; tailored pieces cut the sweetness. A colleague at Thornton's firm designed the '80s-inspired chaise, *opposite*, and Mark Shaw shot the portrait in 1975.



“YOU DON'T SEE A LOT OF ADULT BEDROOMS DONE IN PINK. IT'S KIND OF A FANTASY, HAVING A CANDY-COLOR SPACE LIKE THIS, AND I JUST THOUGHT, WHY NOT?”



and acid yellow, and bittersweet chocolate brown and persimmon.

Perhaps the most dazzling gesture is the living room's cerulean blue paneling. Elaborately carved of heavy oak during the 17th century, the paneling is original to the apartment. (Gilded Age architects gave projects old-world credibility by accenting them with paneling they traveled to Europe to purchase.) But its ornateness and natural finish felt dark and oppressive. The owners wanted it gone; Thornton bargained. “We said, ‘What if instead of tearing it out, we painted it this really great color so it’s more of a texture, as opposed to an overwhelming feature.’” When a colleague showed her an image of a

bright blue mural in Rajasthan, India, featured in Laure Vernière's book *Rajasthan Style*, Thornton knew she'd found the match; the clients were sold.

After deciding on the palette and finding fabrics that realized this vision, Thornton turned to furniture, choosing traditional and classic pieces to balance the bold colors. The interplay ensures a sophisticated space that somehow feels even more fantastical and otherworldly—an unconventional cottage by the lake that is even more of an escape. “This is their fun house,” Thornton says. “There’s nothing it has to accomplish other than to please them, and I think that’s reflected here. You can see the joy in the decor.”

Thornton used a 1980s decorating trick of covering the walls and furniture in a single print (Arbre de Matisse, designed and made famous by Billy Baldwin) to transform a dark, architecturally bland room into a dramatic, snug den. Ledges for art, *opposite*, turn a hallway into a gallery space complete with a lacquered lavender ceiling and a floor painted with a retro geometric pattern. □

