

Color Theories

We asked four local designers to decode some of their most daring color moves, and what did we get? Fourteen brilliant lessons that will change the way you decorate. • BY CHRISTINE DEORIO



WHAT'S BOLD IS NEW AGAIN

Above: Nods to the homeowners' love of animals personalize the space: Arteriors' bird-legged Emilio accent table, an animal-print rug by Surya, and velvet upholstery with a Foo-dog motif. The sunburst-style mirror is by Arteriors, and the swing-arm wall light is from Circa Lighting.

What makes interior designer Katie Schroder cringe? So-called "period-appropriate" color palettes. "If you drive around old Denver neighborhoods, you'll see some really great houses," she says, "and the ones that are painted the craziest colors are usually the most interesting." So Schroder was delighted when the owners of this turn-of-the-century LoHi Victorian expressed an interest in an unconventional palette. "They entertain a lot, so they wanted something parlor-esque, with a moody vibe, for their living room," Schroder says. Here's how she made it work in an old home—and how you can too:

Work a small space. Older homes typically have smaller, more compartmentalized rooms that can be quite constraining—except when it comes to color. "I encourage everyone to get bold in more defined spaces," Schroder says. "Each room can be its own space, so don't be afraid to do it up." Here, the designer played up the walls by painting them Benjamin Moore's Pacific Ocean Blue—then balanced the cool color with warm pops of citron and burnished brass.

Let a pattern inspire your palette. A bold fabric pattern can be a great starting point for a color palette. Here, velvet chair upholstery with a vibrant Foo-dog motif—adapted from a painting by Denver artist Madeleine O'Connell—sparked the blue-and-

citron theme, which benefits from a few subtle pops of pink. "I like to use the less obvious colors in a bold pattern," Schroder says of the latter. "It's not so in your face, but the eye picks up on those details."

But don't match too much. There's a fine line between taking inspiration from a pattern and letting it dictate your color scheme. "I think it's better if you don't use every color in the pattern," Schroder says. "When things start to match, it looks like you got it all at Crate & Barrel. A bit of variation makes it way more interesting."

Design Pro

Interior design: Katie Schroder, Atelier Interior Design

MAKE A SPLASH

When it comes to decorating with color, interior designer Jodi Cook abides by this general rule: "Use neutrals for big investment pieces, then introduce color with accents and artwork." But nurseries—like this one in a family's Hilltop home—are an exception. "There's something more playful about a nursery; because it's a little more juvenile, I think you can have a bit more rope with color," Cook says. "Doing a bright kelly-green cabinet in a nursery bathroom doesn't seem nearly as risky as doing it on a kitchen island." That said, there's still a trick (or four) to getting it right:

Test first. "When you're picking a punchy color, paint up a swatch first," Cook advises. "Paint a piece of tagboard and prop it up, or drape a fabric sample over a chair and look at it in different lights. If you keep loving it, that's a sign it's a go."

Mix and match. Once Cook and her client settled on Benjamin Moore's Kelly Green paint color for the custom bathroom vanity, the designer pulled similar shades of green into the adjacent nursery, but in different materials: an abstract animal-print wallpaper (Les Touches by Brunschwig & Fils) for the ceiling and Groundworks' green-and-black embroidered Chalet fabric for the drapery.

Strike a balance. "There's definitely a visual weight to the vanity, so it was important to create an even distribution of color throughout the space, so it doesn't feel too heavy on one side," Cook says. "Here, the window treatment provides another vertical element of color on a side wall, which gives the room a sense of balance."

Edit your design. Initially, Cook added a green accent pillow to the room, then decided it was too much of a good thing. "Coco Chanel said, 'Before you leave the house, look in the mirror and take at least one thing off,'" Cook says. "I think the same rule applies to decorating."



Above: To complement the bathroom's vibrant vanity, which is painted Benjamin Moore's Kelly Green, designer Jodi Cook opted for warm brass accents and pure-white tiles—hexagons on the floor, subway tile laid in a basketweave pattern on the backsplash—that add a touch of visual texture.

Facing page: Kelly-green accents pack a punch in this nursery, but texture plays a big role too, thanks to Cook's addition of a shaggy shearling rug, a woven storage basket, and patinaed-brass light fixtures and cabinet hardware.

Design Pro
Interior design:
 Jodi Cook, Cook Design House





Above: A Caesarstone countertop and walls in "straight-up white" let the red millwork shine in this laundry/mudroom. Designer Emily Tucker had the ceramic backsplash tile laid in a herringbone pattern "to give it a tiny bit of interest," she says.

Right: Tucker devised a simple design for this custom storage unit—Shaker-style doors, a V-groove back panel, chunky crown molding—then finished big with a semi-gloss coat of Benjamin Moore's Million Dollar Red paint color.

Facing page: Custom millwork—cabinets, cubbies, and drawers—fills the majority of the space, which is why Tucker opted to paint it an impactful color. "I wanted it to be really in your face," she says, "and if it was on the walls, you just weren't going to see that much of it."

Design Pro

Interior design:
Emily Tucker,
Emily Tucker Design



SMALL ROOM, BIG IMPACT

When the owners of this home in Boulder's Newlands neighborhood hired designer Emily Tucker to create a new mudroom/laundry room as part of a larger renovation project, Tucker recognized an opportunity to go big with color. "Laundry rooms and mudrooms—powder rooms too—are all in the same vein in that you're not really spending that much time in them, so they're

great places to be playful," she says. When she suggested Benjamin Moore's super-saturated Million Dollar Red paint color for the room's custom cabinetry, she expected her clients to balk at the geranium-red hue. "But they were up for it," she says, "so we went all in on the red." Here's how you can too:

Use sparingly. "If you have too many colors in one room, your eye doesn't know where to go—and nothing gets to be the star," Tucker says. Here, walls painted Benjamin Moore's White Dove, plain-white ceramic backsplash tile, and a white Caesarstone countertop let the cabinet color shine.

Finish strong. When working with a big, bold color, Tucker recommends choosing an equally impactful paint finish. "A richer finish—from satin up to high gloss—is going to really elevate

that color and make it so much more saturated," she says. For this room, she chose a semi-gloss finish that shows off the richness of the red—but not water marks.

And if you're nervous, start small. "One of my favorite tricks for adding color, especially on cabinetry, is to paint only the inset panels—or even just the framing bead—a bold color," Tucker says. "It's a really fun way to add [vibrancy] without it being so overwhelming."



Above: "Essentially, the whole room is white," Schumacher says of the kitchen—save for a few impactful design elements, including turquoise window trim (Benjamin Moore's Pacific Ocean Blue) and a blue island (River Blue, also by Benjamin Moore), which she paired with matching custom stools upholstered in soft-blue mohair. Brass accents—including Kelly Wearstler's crystal-dripping Halcyon linear chandelier—add a bit of bling. ■

Facing page: A glimpse into the adjacent dining room offers a peek at the vibrant wallpaper and upholstery pattern—Serendip in turquoise, by Manuel Canovas—that inspired the kitchen's color palette. Designer Andrea Schumacher used similar blue hues to make the island, backsplash, and window pop against crisp white cabinetry and walls.

Right: The kitchen's focal point is the cooktop's backsplash, for which Schumacher chose a fish-scale tile in a deep peacock hue. The custom hood, fabricated by Harrison Custom Builders, is painted to match and trimmed with burnished brass.

Design Pro
Interior design:
 Andrea Schumacher,
 Andrea Schumacher Interiors

BRIGHT IDEAS

If just one designer could be crowned Denver's color queen, Andrea Schumacher would be a top contender—for working serious magic with striking shades. Equally daring, however, is the owner of this renovated Cherry Hills home, who wanted "a ton of color" in her new rooms, including her kitchen, Schumacher says. A single fabric swatch—Manuel Canovas' exotic floral Serendip pattern, which Schumacher used as upholstery and wallpaper in the adjacent dining room—sparked the entire scheme, which shows off vibrant blue hues. Schumacher shares her secrets for pulling off a color-filled cooking space:

Find your hue. To find the color that fits your style, Schumacher suggests collecting images of things in your home that mean the most to you. "Put them all on one piece of paper and try to find the common denominator," she says. "You might see a certain shade of blue or a graphic pattern. Or your grandmother's vase might inspire your entire design."

Have some fun. "A kitchen has so many design elements to play with," Schumacher says. "Everyone does the island in a color"—Schumacher painted the base of this one Benjamin Moore's River Blue and topped it with a slab of blue-veined quartzite—"but you can add color with lighting or the backsplash. If you have upper cabinets with glass doors, install wallpaper behind them. Or wallpaper just the ceiling. Or add colorful barstools...." You get the picture.

Make it pop. To maximize the impact of this room's blue accents, Schumacher gave them a crisp white backdrop. The turquoise window trim is surrounded by walls painted Benjamin Moore's Swiss Coffee—"my go-to white," Schumacher says—and the peacock-blue, fish-scale backsplash tiles are defined by bright-white grout.

Create a context. "There should be some color continuity among your rooms," Schumacher says. "If one room is entirely blue, the next room doesn't have to be blue, but you might add a blue vase." On this home's main floor, turquoise window trim is the common thread.