


FANCY FREE




SET A FEW BOUNDARIES, THEN GO AHEAD
AND RUN WILD! ONE YOUNG DESIGNER
CREATES A NEW YORK CITY ESCAPE
THAT'S A PRIMER FOR SMALL-
SPACE CHIC.

INTERIOR DESIGN *Elizabeth Pyne* INTERVIEW *Lisa Cregan* PHOTOGRAPHY *Ngoc Minh Ngo* PRODUCER *Senga Mortimer*



Bold aqua and freewheeling patterns bring cheer to a one-bedroom Manhattan apartment decorated by Elizabeth Pyne. The Nonchalant lounge chairs by Barbara Barry for McGuire are covered in Lulu DK's Dancers. Hexagonal table from Mecox. Rug, ABC Carpet & Home. **OPPOSITE:** A vase from Bungalow 5 and a pair of elephant *tulpières* pick up the colors of the entry's Follies wallpaper by Tyler Hall. Clarendon mirror, Crate & Barrel.



Walls painted in Benjamin Moore's Opal Essence and porcelain objects from Dallas Boesendahl provide a crisp, clean contrast to deep teal bookshelf interiors. The custom-made sofa, covered in Pindler's Streamline, is topped with pillows in Lulu DK's Ocean and a bolster in Plushy from Perennials. Coffee table, R.E. Steele Antiques. Paris floor lamp, Broad Beach Design. Curtains in Brunschwig & Fils's Clouds.



LISA CREGAN: You've got such bold, vivacious style. Do you think fearlessness is an acquired skill, or is that just who you are?

ELIZABETH PYNE: It runs in the family. I'm so proud to be the third generation of designers at McMillen, Inc. My late grandmother Betty Sherrill was the longtime chairman. She had such a cheerful, happy aesthetic, and I'm a little like her. The pair of elephant vases in the entry are very much in her spirit because they bring out the acid green in the wallpaper, but they also make you smile. McMillen is America's oldest decorating firm, and that makes people think we're so traditional. It drives me crazy! We've always been innovative—Jackson Pollock met Lee Krasner at one of our openings, and we staged Willem de Kooning's first gallery show. My mom, Ann Pyne, is McMillen's president, and her style is more cerebral. She keeps me focused on quality. But this apartment truly reflects my clients—the wife's favorite color is aqua.

And boy, did you take that to heart.

Aqua is such an amazing color: blue, green, and yellow all at the same time. What's great about small apartments is you can create a wholly enveloping experience with one consistent color thread. But to do that, you have to be bold! This one-bedroom apartment overlooks a busy Manhattan street, yet inside it is its own fantastical environment of color and pattern—it's self-contained, like a nest. It's on the sixth floor in a building that gets lots of sunlight, and my mother always says light rooms should be light and dark rooms dark. Aqua is bright, but it's also peaceful and spa-like, perfect for a pied-à-terre owned by a Connecticut couple with grown children.

What leads a mature couple from the suburbs to ask a 34-year-old to decorate their apartment?

A blind date with their son! As it turned out, neither of us felt a romantic connection, but he thinks I'm a good designer and now he recommends me. I worked in the Old Master Paintings department at Sotheby's before joining McMillen, and this was my first major design project. I think my clients knew they were taking a chance, but we've become great friends. It's a good lesson—always go on the date! You never know what will happen.

I certainly didn't expect this wallpaper to happen when I opened the front door.

I think of this chinoiserie wallpaper the



ABOVE: In the diminutive bedroom, antique bird prints, Matouk linens, and Christopher Spitzmiller's Aurora lamp subtly stand out from walls painted in Benjamin Moore's Snow Angel. The custom headboard is upholstered in Thibaut's Hampton Ponds.

way I think of a Watteau painting—a fête galante, a little escape hidden in a room. I've always been a daydreamer, and when I was a child I'd lie in bed and look at the pattern of my wallpaper, run my hand along its contours, and let my mind go places. Painted walls can't do that. I love how the pagodas and curlicues hold your interest as soon as you walk in. The Venetian mirrored chest reflects sunlight from the windows across the room. I also chose that piece because it's strong enough to hold its own with the wallpaper.

And is there a bird lover here?

The fabric on this pair of chairs is one of my favorites. It's hand-painted, which gives it a wonderful naïveté. Plus the birds are so cute, and I often try to choose things that are upbeat and happy. The subway can be frustrating, and people on the street can be difficult, so your apartment should make up for that. My client liked the birds so much, she carried them through to the antique prints in the bedroom. But to make sure things didn't get too sweet, we used a strong graphic print at the windows, made the sofa a solid block of blue, and added this

dark rug for gravitas. The living room can take a lot of pattern, but in the tiny bedroom we did the headboard and window treatments in the same print for balance and calm.

This dark teal on the back of the bookcases really shows off aqua's masculine side.

That took a long time to get right. We started out light, and as we experimented, it kept getting darker and darker. We wanted it to have impact, and we were surprised at how dark we needed to go. The final shade came out of that striped pillow on the sofa. We set it off with white coral and German porcelain for modernity, the

way ancient Greek temples look contemporary silhouetted against a blue sky. Aqua and white look great together. I used that combination everywhere here; cream wouldn't have been crisp enough.

You're a New Yorker with a pint-sized place of your own. Any tips for small-space dwellers?

See how these living room chairs have smallish arms? Most of their square footage is given to the seat, so you can curl up in them. They feel luxurious and roomy even though they're not big. And the tall table between the armchairs is all about being able to entertain in a tight space. Instead of some sewing circle where four people are forced to talk to one another, the two people at the chairs can put their drinks down on the table and have a private conversation. And the chair in the bedroom has a curved back so it can tuck into the corner. A square back would take up a lot more space.

You obviously adored your grandmother. Is there something here that especially reminds you of her?

It's a small thing—the twisted black candles on the mantel. They were one of my grandmother's signatures, and my family has them everywhere. They're kind of amusing, so she would put them in silver candleholders to make a room feel more approachable. She was so lighthearted; she just wanted everyone to be comfortable and have fun. I'm still really inspired by her.

The shapely curve of the Natalie dresser by Worlds Away and a chair covered in Charlotte Moss's Fanny are inviting. Albero table by Bunny Williams Home. Curtains in Hampton Ponds by Thibaut match the headboard. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES

