



For the sunroom, which serves as a TV room as well as the wife's office, designer Summer Thornton (right) took a detour from the scheme of blue and white in the rest of the house in favor of walls painted Farrow & Ball Pink Ground. "It's a soft, peachy shade inspired by the glow the room gets in the afternoon," she says. A skirted sectional and ottoman amp up the coziness.

Turning on the CHARM

Designer Summer Thornton harnesses the power of ruffles, scallop edging, and mismatched patterns to create a grandparents' dream home—bursting with whimsy and welcome for visiting family.



The living room furniture is arranged in near-perfect symmetry, with the exception of one lamp and one table. "You always need something to throw off the symmetry," Thornton says. All the elements center around an unusually large coffee table. "I love a supersize coffee table, because there's never enough room for all the drinks, food, games, art books, flowers, and other things you want to put there," the designer says.



It's not easy to define "charm." It's one of those ineffable qualities where—as the saying goes—you know it when you see it. Still, most would agree that a charming home is one that delights the eye and is instantly inviting. Never too serious or self-important, it also brims with character and personality. And few would deny that this 1913 cedar-shake house in Winnetka, IL, has all that in spades.

The designer, Chicago-based interior decorator Summer Thornton, says that the owners envisioned a classic house with universal appeal where they could create memories for their children and grandchildren. Thornton had designed the couple's last home, a Chicago condo they had purchased after their children had grown. "With that apartment, they wanted something edgy suiting their empty nester lifestyle," she says. This time around, with their grandchildren in mind, the couple sought something softer and more nostalgic. "They wanted it to feel beautiful and welcoming—the ultimate grandma-grandpa house," she says. "It needed to feel like a warm hug."

Thornton accordingly turned on the charm, and the house announces its whimsy right at the entrance, where a fanciful ribbon of bright blue paint outlines the cased opening of the foyer. This decorative flourish accentuates the front entry



and “adds a certain je ne sais quoi,” says the designer, explaining that she got the idea from photos of artist Cy Twombly’s home and studio in Gaeta, Italy. The sweet scrolled design also introduces the house’s primary palette of blues and whites.

Medleys of patterns in the kitchen, dining room, and bedrooms add character and energy. The effect is most pronounced in the dining room, where a delicate marbled wallpaper on the ceiling contrasts with a bold lily motif on the walls. “I like mixing patterns, so the more the merrier for me,” Thornton says.

The house is also an argument in favor of old-school romantic touches like ruffles and curvy edges. While some might be fearful of such frills leaning toward the fuddy-duddy, when employed with confidence, they’re anything but conservative. In the breakfast nook, for instance, the scallop trim on the Roman shades looks fresh, thanks to its graphic blue piping. The same with the curtain canopy in the primary bedroom, which features a valance with oversize wavy edging that cuts through all of the patterns with a calming pause. In the sunroom, skirted trim softens the clean lines of the ottoman and a pair of upholstered stools. “Nostalgia is a big part of this house’s appeal,” Thornton says.



“Despite what you may have heard, there are no limits when it comes to how many prints can be in one room,” says Thornton, who successfully juxtaposed multiple patterns in the dining room, *opposite*, by sticking to shades of blue and varying the scale of the prints. “Just keep going until it feels right.”

The painted wood floor of the kitchen, *above*, continues the blue-and-white palette and imbues the space with a lighter, more casual feeling than stone or ceramic would have. The smaller scale of the backsplash tile creates a focal point. In the breakfast nook, *left*, wood tones and mismatched pillows add warmth.



Perhaps the most enchanting element of the house is found in the primary bathroom and bedroom, where Thornton used yards of ornamental wood trellis to conjure the breezy ambience of an island pavilion. The latticework in the bathroom covers nearly every surface; light from the window above the bathtub highlights its lines. "The bathroom is very dreamy," Thornton says. "The trellis makes you feel like you're outdoors."



Mounting crisp white curtains to the ceiling creates a canopy with the illusion of extra height. Thornton upholstered the headboard in the same blue-and-white toile as the wallpaper but used different designs of similar colors for the window curtains, bed coverings, and assorted cushions, so the room feels neither too disjointed nor too monotonous.

The narrow daybed in the sunroom does double duty as both a room divider—separating the office area from the TV hangout zone—and an inviting perch that can be approached from either side. The rattan chair, coffee table, and light fixture convey a tropical vacation ease.



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1

FOYER

The entry sets a playful tone with a blue painted scroll framing the doorway, almost like a stage set. A pair of side chairs can serve as extra seating when all the family is together.

2

DINING ROOM

The upward-flowing arms of a triple-light sconce with marbled paper shades subtly echo and reverse the pattern of the wallpaper behind it, which features arcs of blossoms pointing downward.

3

GUEST BEDROOM

Despite overlapping the window, a pair of wide rattan headboards work, thanks to their open lattice design and color making them light and almost invisible.

4

SUNROOM

Multicolor trim and a ruffled skirt elevate a salmon pink ottoman to the heights of grandma chic. A note of the same pink in the floral border of a pillow links the pieces.

5

GUEST BATHROOM

Thornton happily mixes metals, pairing brass sconces with nickel sink fittings. "The rule that metals need to match is one I always break," she says.

6

PRIMARY BEDROOM

The blue trim on a white painted armoire emphasizes the furniture's interesting lines and echoes the paint treatment in the foyer. ■