

The daring color scheme in the living room draws inspiration from Frida Kahlo's iconic family home in Mexico called "Blue House."



A FEAST OF COLOR

ON HARNESS CREEK

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This retreat on the grassy banks of Harness Creek dares to depart from traditional waterfront homes drenched in neutrals. Whimsical furnishings, intricate patterns, and intense, saturated colors are so vibrant that they encourage an inner joy. "This was all part of the plan," reflect the homeowners. "We wanted it to be a happy place and an escape from the Type A Washington, where we are most of the time."

Interior designer Marika Meyer explains that the interior's artistic style draws loosely from the work of Swedish design master Josef Frank. In the 1920s, Frank challenged Le Corbusier's pragmatic idea that "homes were machines to live in." He believed standardized interiors stifled the imagination and developed his own type of modernism that incorporated "comfort, hominess, and a wealth of color."

In this home, imagination (and humans) can roam freely, thanks to its dramatic remodel. After buying the home in 2020, the couple worked with Lynbrook of Annapolis to reconceive the interior, transforming its dated traditional floorplan into an airy, contemporary space. However, there were challenges to overcome. Built in 1983, the home had rotting wood framing and floors so uneven they were "a rolling sea," notes Lynbrook project supervisor Dave Perkowski.

The remodel took ten months and over 2500 hours, with three phases, he explains. A fourth involving the exterior is in the works. First, the team removed and replaced

This jubilant kitchen exemplifies the interior designer's plan to "play into simple forms and then have fun with texture, color, and pattern."



Lynbrook of Annapolis made a miniature model of each light fixture so the designer could experiment and find the perfect angles.



Mauve geometric designs and bold appointments brighten the lower level.



more than 100 aging windows and doors with more modern block casing. Next, they tackled the basement, rebuilding the HVAC, water systems, and electrical wiring.

On the first and second floors, carpenters Matt Culp, Joel Jaimes, and Joe Tyszka created many custom elements, such as pocket doors and walk-in closets; a pot nook composed of walnut is built into the kitchen wall. Key to the home's visual transformation was the installation of reglet trim. "It's something the homeowners really loved," recalls Lynbrook managing partner Meredith Hillyer. This architectural specialty trim creates a contemporary modern look.

Another sea change occurred when a vestibule in the living room was removed to open up the floor plan. Unfortunately, it contained a pillar that was structurally necessary to the entire home. After consulting with engineers, Perkowski solved the problem: "We inserted a 12-inch steel beam with a crane, creating a cavity so it could slip into the middle of the house. All the load was now transferred to the exterior walls," he says.

With the vestibule and interior walls removed, the kitchen, dining room, and living room became one wide-open space. Now, Meyer and the homeowners could get to work using color abundantly yet strategically. The couple had worked with Meyer on their primary home in Chevy Chase, which is also colorful. Their Annapolis home was an opportunity to go even further with color plus take some risks. "They were ready to really push the limits and have fun. We knew in this one we wanted it to have a bit of a Scandinavian feel. We did not want a traditional waterfront home."

She explains that Scandinavian design principles favor clean lines, functionality, neutral tones, and natural materials. Though neutral tones appear in the wood elements in this home, layers of color inject a modern impulse. "We were thinking about beautiful textured wood and wood tones and playing into simple forms, and then allowing ourselves to have fun with texture, color, and pattern," explains Meyer, who calls the aesthetic "modern Scandinavian."

Her client is passionate about fashion, and many of the unusual color combinations are inspired by what she likes.



Vibrant blues and mosaic tiles continue the home's Mexican influences.



On the second floor, color schemes in the primary bedroom suite are more serene; black built-in bookshelves add a quiet drama.

This fashion play begins in an unlikely spot—the basement. “It used to be just a dark, dank, windowless, scary basement,” notes Meyer. A mauve kitchenette, cupboards, and bar area in bold geometric patterns now enliven the space. The adjoining pool room and laundry have contrasting colorful appointments, including cheerful striped tiles on the shower wall.

After the basement, they shifted their focus to the first and second floors. In the kitchen and living room, Meyer points out Scandinavian elements in the unfinished white oak floors and natural walnut panels. “We did a side grain cut so you can see the beautiful striation of the natural walnut in the cabinets. We matched that in the cutout where the pots were hanging and on the fireplace wall in the living room.”

The purples and blues in the living room are inspired by a commanding portrait of Frida Kahlo. The homeowner is a Latin Americanist and has visited the famous artist’s iconic home, Blue House, in Mexico City. The space pays homage to Kahlo’s intense, powerful paintings. A couch is upholstered in an astonishing floral fabric by Schumaker with accent pillows streaked in orange. The generous chairs are a moody purple. A vivid green flower lamp sourced from Mexico is sinuous and striking.

This provocative palette continues in the dining room; each chair is a different color. A whimsical light fixture with multicolored arms seems to fly over the table. The daring chandelier became a defining element, says Meyer, visually separating the space from the two rooms on either end.



Lynbrook of Annapolis' carpenters created a custom pocket door in this vibrant bathroom.



A kid's room, like every space in this home, is filled with vibrant jewel-toned furnishings.

TIPS FROM THE DESIGNER:


BRING JOY INTO EVERY OPPORTUNITY THAT PRESENTS ITSELF, FROM YOUR LIGHTING TO YOUR FLATWARE TO YOUR PLATES. HAVE FUN WITH IT AND PUT THOUGHT INTO IT. FORM AND FUNCTION MEET EVERY DAY... WHY NOT EMBRACE THE FORM JUST AS MUCH AS THE FUNCTION?

Upstairs, the primary bedroom and bath have calmer colors than those below. Meyer shares her thinking: "How do I marry the energy that we find on the first floor in a way that is appropriate and restful in a primary suite?" Her answer was to add gold accents that are expressive but muted. She explains that the black arched shelving has a level of drama and intensity but is not loud. "There is less contrast in the patterns. As you meander through, you come to a room that makes sense. It is peaceful. It is restful. It gives you that balance; the main story is the water view."

Except for the exterior, the house is complete. The homeowners note that the many "happy accidents" they endured became opportunities to build a better home. "Lynbrook left, and this house is now a tank. Because they opened up every wall, they could spray foam in every nook and cranny, from the attic to the basement. When they were done, one of the carpenters looked at me and said, 'We've just turned your house into a Yeti cooler.'"

This home may be a Yeti cooler, but one filled with color. Meyer agrees. "We used just about every single color in the rainbow, in

little peek-a-boo corners, tuckaway moments, even in the garage. It is one of those moments when you ask, "Why not have a little bit of fun? It is not for everybody... this client just felt confident and said, 'Let's go for it.'"

Disparate words used to describe this project include "Yeti cooler," "Scandinavian," and "rainbow." These add up to a kind of practical magic. Can a Yeti cooler contain a rainbow? Is this even possible? Definitely not, but thanks to a visionary team, a house that holds a rainbow is indeed possible. 

BUILDER: LYNBROOK OF ANNAPOLIS, Annapolis, Maryland. INTERIOR DESIGNER: MARIKA MEYER, Marika Meyer Interiors, Washington, DC. COUNTERTOPS: IN HOME STONE, Annapolis, Maryland. CABINETRY: LYNDON SENTZ, Lyndon Heath Cabinetry, East Earl, Pennsylvania.

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