



Serenity **NOW**

Interior designer Beth Armijo creates a palette of easygoing colors and classic, comfortable furnishings for a family-friendly sanctuary in Washington Park.

BY CHRISTINE DEORIO • PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIMBERLY GAVIN

When square footage is precious, as it is in this dining nook, a banquette can maximize seating and minimize clutter. A trestle-style table, custom-made by local craftsman Jed Fritz, cozies up to an L-shaped bench topped with a seat cushion upholstered in kid-friendly vinyl fabric by Kravet. Turquoise Willa Wood dining chairs from Crate & Barrel add a pop of color. The antique-brass-accented Callopie light fixture is from Circa Lighting.





IT'S ONE THING TO DECORATE A HOME WITH STYLE. It's quite another to compose rooms so cool and serene, they can soothe even the most frayed nerves. But to make those beautiful, peaceful spaces durable enough to withstand the antics of three sticky-fingered young children and a pair of rambunctious dogs? That was a challenge homeowner and real estate agent Jewel Brown knew she couldn't tackle on her own. So she called on Beth Armijo, owner of Armijo Design Group, to help her create the calm, classic, and inviting living spaces she longed for.

Brown's house was brand-new, but local design/build firm Chalet gave it many of the architectural details found in the Wash Park neighborhood's original bungalows and Tudors, from elaborately paneled walls to coffered ceilings. Here, Armijo explains how she played up that strong base while creating a lightened-up take on traditional style.



LET THE WALLS DO THE TALKING • "The kitchen backsplash should always be something interesting," says designer Beth Armijo, who sourced ceramic tiles in an arabesque pattern from Decorative Materials. "The pattern is a bit exotic, but the white color tones it down." A pair of distressed-bronze Amelia lanterns from Hudson Valley Lighting illuminates the island, where vinyl-upholstered stools by Lee Industries pull up to Sea Pearl quartzite countertops from the Stone Collection.



PLAY WITH RESTRAINT • The powder room makes a bold statement with its ornate mirror from Horchow, but a custom slate blue vanity, the gray-green grasscloth wallcovering from Kneeder Fauchère, and wall sconces by Hudson Valley Lighting relate to the home's gray-based palette. "It's important to use similar undertones throughout the house to keep the colors feeling even," Armijo says.

SOFTEN THE EDGES • "The family room demonstrates that furniture can be very tailored but still cozy," Armijo says. "The secret is in the fabric, which should be touchable and comfortable." She reupholstered the clients' existing sofa in a durable woven fabric by Perrier, chose a blue fabric with a subtle stripe in the weave for a pair of Kravet's Adair chairs, and anchored the grouping with a leather Alder & Company ottoman that is "very wipeable, yet pretty." To add "something old" to the mix of new furnishings, she hung a large French antique mirror on the room's one windowless wall. The rug is from Williams-Sonoma Home.



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5280 Home: These rooms feel so peaceful. What's your secret?

Beth Armijo: My clients—a couple with three young children and two dogs—are always on the go and wanted their home to be a retreat. I created a calming backdrop by using neutral, easy-on-the-eye colors that are very even throughout the home; they don't jump from light to dark. This floor plan is very open, and when you can see all the rooms at once, the colors have to play well together.

Simple, neutral palettes seem deceptively tricky.

They are. It's challenging to find colors that everyone likes, that they won't get tired of, and that work with all the materials and furnishings in a house without jumping all over the spectrum.

Any quick tips for adding accent colors?

Clients often tell me, "I really like a lot of color," and I have to remind them that a lot of one thing



CONSULT THE COLOR WHEEL • Armijo, who is an accomplished painter, says she "thinks in color," but for most of us, it wouldn't hurt to brush up on a little color theory. "Opposite (and near-opposite) colors on the color wheel are complementary, which is why the master bedroom's mix of slate blue walls and yellow accents works so well," the designer explains. A cozy throw, embroidered accent pillows, and woven rugs enliven the room with a vibrant citron hue. The upholstered Naomi headboard is from Hickory Chair Furniture, and the custom side table is by Denver-based Ryan Schläpfer Fine Furniture.



POLISH TO PERFECTION

Local design/build firm Chalet paneled the entire master bathroom and built the custom vanity, creating a backdrop "anyone could work with," Armijo says. To live up to this high level of finish, she specified built-in mirrors. "Some builders don't like to do this because it's more complicated," she says of the treatment, "but it creates a much more finished look." A glittering chandelier from Pottery Barn Kids, mosaic marble floor tile, and polished Calacatta gold marble countertops sparkle like gems in the jewel box room.



AGE GRACEFULLY • This room's nightstand, floor lamp, chandelier, and monogram wall decal are all from Pottery Barn Kids, but Armijo selected something much more mature to adorn the windows. "There's no age limit to this fabric," she says of the Sarandi Flint print by Romo. "As this child grows older, she can change her paint color and artwork, but she doesn't necessarily have to change her drapery or her bed. Those items are the bigger investments, so it's smart to choose longer-lasting looks."

COMBINE PATTERNS CAREFULLY

Previous spread: The office illustrates Armijo's approach to mixing patterns: "The colors should go together, but the key is to change up the scale," she says. For the draperies, she chose a silvery tone-on-tone fabric with a subtle peacock motif "that's roughly a third of the size of the rug's tribal pattern." For contrast, the wing chair by Vanguard Furniture is upholstered with a plaid fabric. "The linear quality of plaids and stripes doesn't fight with other patterns," she explains. A pair of Visual Comfort sconces flanks artwork from the homeowners' collection. The oak Luberon desk is by Grange.

is never good. In this home's powder room, for example, the statement is in the Baroque mirror and the gray-blue vanity. If I had made everything a statement, the impact would have been diluted.

So where's a safe place to start?

I like to take a handful of colors in different shades and repeat them in little pops that can be easily swapped out. In the master bedroom we chose yellow accents because it was such a beautiful color against those slate blue walls. But if my clients don't want yellow later, they can take out a few pillows and start fresh.

What makes the crisp white kitchen so inviting?

Texture. You need a lot more of it when the color palette is so simple. This tiled backsplash is bold and graphic, which creates a lot of interest, and the gray grout—which

complements the tiles' dark edges—adds to the visual texture. The natural quartzite countertop, which has the soft gray veining of marble, brings another layer of subtle texture into the space.

How do you accessorize tranquil rooms like these?

Less is more. I don't like to go out and buy a bunch of stuff. Accessories should be personal, so I always start with my clients' items first. I make sure I find things from their basement shelves that have meaning—photos of the family, souvenirs from their travels, or books they've read.

For all your restraint, you did make a few bold statements.

Yes! That powder bathroom is a fun room. My client knew she wanted a funky mirror, so we chose a very ornate one with a white high-gloss finish that really pops against the steely gray-green grasscloth. In the

kitchen, turquoise chairs are lively without overwhelming the space. They're an easy way to add color in just a few pieces.

This home has so many new furnishings. How do you avoid that we-bought-everything-at-once look?

I like to keep the lines and materials consistent, and even repeat some of them, but I use different manufacturers for different items to keep the mix feeling authentic. For this project, I was able to incorporate a few of my clients' existing furnishings, too, like the farmhouse dining table and living room sofas, which we reupholstered.

What did you really get right here?

Finding pieces that look great and can take a bit of a beating. That's always the challenge when designing for families. You've got to make sure every piece fits their lifestyles and can stand the test of time. ■