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To give the open-flow living and dining rooms of an East Hampton, New York, house a light, relaxed air, designer Meg Braff used soft blues and whites, linens, cottons, and a seagrass rug. The sofa is upholstered in Dunemere Texture in Pale Blue by Hinson; the chair cushion fabric is Linaa from Pollack. Walls and trim are painted Benjamin Moore's White Dove.

YOU'LL NEVER GET TIRED OF BLUE

HAPPY FABRICS,
SEXY LAMPS,
VELVET AND
GRASS CLOTH
AND GARDEN
FLOWERS

Interior design by
MEG BRAFF

Interview by
JAMES SERVIN

Photographs by
JAMES MERRELL



The bold shapes of a 1980s painting by Gustav Glin are echoed in the circular backs of the Elkins loop armchairs from C. Bell. Club chairs are upholstered in Ball II in Denim on White, by China Seas. Curtains are Jane Churchill's Nursery Stripe in Jue. OPPOSITE: Braff hung a large French painted mirror in the dining room to reflect light from the French doors. The Bausman & Company trestle table mixes easily with Mrs. Howard dining chairs.









JAMES SERVIN:

This is quite a big dose of blue here.

MEG BRAFF:

I'm a blue person. There's hardly a blue I don't like. When I get a client who's also a blue person, there is going to be a lot of blue. It felt so right here—so ocean and air. Blue also works well off so many colors. Even though the house is strong on color, it still feels neutral because there's also a good dose of white balancing it all. White cuts through it and allows it to breathe. >>

"With four young children, durability in the family room was key for the owners," Braff says. "The dark blue on the sofas, the leather ottoman, and the sisal rug are practically bulletproof." The sofa is upholstered in Hinson's Rawlston in Dunham Blue. Walls are covered in Africa Raffia in Key West Teal by Phillip Jeffries. The Farra Cocktail ottoman is by Hickory Chair; table lamp is by Christopher Spitzmiller.

That blue and white palette in the living room is so inviting.

I wanted it to be light, airy, and relaxing, with a feeling of summer and bare feet. The room is great for entertaining, napping, or reading by the fire. The white we chose for the walls and trim is very warm, and I used linen, cotton, and seagrass for a casual, family-friendly environment. We debated about giving more color to the walls—something with a bit more blue in it—but I think we're happy that we left it. There's plenty of blue going on.

You also seem to like green quite a bit. Your aesthetic feels preppy, but with a fresh point of view.

I grew up in Mississippi. I had a very traditional upbringing. Most of my clients are young, with young families. And a lot of the work that I do is in resort locations. I love the whole idea of it, of an easy, wonderful, relaxed lifestyle. I'm drawn to colors that are clear, but just offbeat enough to catch your eye. I really love those Kelly green walls in the master bedroom. That green is very Kate Spade, very snappy—and I like decorating that's snappy and fun. I like beautiful and serious, too. But we wanted the bedroom to have a sleek, youthful feel.

The guest room is also pretty youthful and fun. That striped wallpaper is an interesting counterpoint to the solid walls in the other rooms.

The bold stripes give the bedroom a whimsical feel. But I didn't want the house to feel like a candy box, where every room was a different color. You've got to have some continuity. I do think the bedrooms all respond in a cohesive way. It's all very lighthearted.

What is it about grass cloth that you like? You used it on the walls in both the master bedroom and the family room.

Grass cloth is a great tool for giving a little warmth and character and weight to a new house, a feeling of 'It's always been here.' It's nice to have that layer, but still have it feel fresh and clean.

You really have a way with layering pattern. Any tips you can give us?

You can layer patterns when you mix scales. You can put a small-scale batik on a lampshade, next to a large-scale chair with a large-scale pattern. The mix is really very interesting, and it can still come out looking neutral—shockingly so. In the living room, all the different scales—from the painting



over the fireplace to the size of the circles on the Frances Elkins-style chairs—tie in. I love rooms where the eye just bounces from detail to detail. On the other hand, there's nothing worse than going into a room and it's like, 'Oh my God, this is so overwhelming, I don't know where to look first.'

Confident, strategic accents, like the lime green lamp and ottoman in the family room, keep a room from being too rigid or sleepy.

Initially, the family room had a much more monochromatic feel—more turquoises and blues. One day I arrived, and my client had just purchased that gorgeous lime green

lamp by Christopher Spitzmiller. I thought, 'That's brilliant. Let's go with it and repeat the color somewhere.' Often I feel that if you bring in a strong color and repeat it somewhere in the room, then all of a sudden it makes sense. You have a balance of color. So we upholstered the ottoman in lime green leather, and added a little tape trim to the lampshades to echo that.

Is there one accent in the house that ties everything together?

The painting in the living room brings in a lot of the colors of the house. It's by Gustav Bolin, and it was painted in the '60s. He's a Swedish artist I often look for at auction or online, because I pretty much like everything he does. The clients had pictured something more traditional. I told them, 'We have to try this. Just live with it for a month and tell me what you think.' I was going to buy it, no matter what, for inventory. It's got strong color, but I never tire of looking at it.

For a country house, there are surprisingly few nature notes.

As with anything, it's possible to have one nature note too many. But anything that feels a little bit organic adds warmth and interest to a house.

What gives a room longevity?

Classic, comfortable upholstery. If you keep 70 percent of the room fairly neutral—I just mean solids, I don't mean lack of color—it allows you, down the road, to bring things in and make it feel more current.

What kind of things?

Lampshades and slipcovers are a great way to freshen things up. Accessories like lacquered boxes add a shot of color. I'm a big fan of lots of little stools for extra seating. You can put fabric on them you'd never dream of putting on a sofa. If at some point you want a change, you can just have them reupholstered. This house has all the core essentials, but it still has growing room. The owners can add more art, more rugs, more color if they want. If the pizzazz begins to fade for them, they can give it new zip. It's good to have that kind of flexibility—it gives you freedom.

PRODUCED BY SENGA MORTIMER & WHITNEY ROBINSON

ABOVE: Bright green, boldly patterned wallpaper—Lysette Reverse in Palm Green on Tan, from China Seas—gives the small powder room big personality. OPPOSITE: "The printed fabric in the guest bedroom is whimsical," Braff says, "but the beige and aqua palette is very restful." Bed and curtain fabric is Lyford Background in Inca Gold on White, by China Seas. Wallpaper is Millennium Stripe in Beige and White, by First Editions. Ottomans are by Jonathan Adler.





Braff continued the green theme in the master bath, "but in a much more subtle way—I didn't want to take away from those beautiful marble tiles." Wallpaper is Bangalore Paisley by China Seas. The double-ended pedestal tub is Cheviot's Balmoral Cast Iron Bath. LEFT: In the master bedroom, an ottoman from Mecox Gardens stands on a Vermilion fretwork rug.



In the master bedroom, Braff used strong doses of white to balance the summery intensity of the walls, covered in Manila Hemp in Kelly Green by Phillip Jeffries. The Quincy Bed from Summer Hill "makes the most of the high ceiling," says Braff. Bedding is by Hamburg House. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES



