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House Beautiful

fall **color** *issue*

the new Naturals



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Interior design by
JASON BELL

Interview by LISA CREGAN

Photographs by
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CORAL,
AQUAMARINE,
TURQUOISE,
AND RADIANT
WHITE

are Natural

*In coastal Connecticut,
a house shimmers
with the colors of seashells
and lustrous pearls*

The entryway of this early 1900s house is painted Benjamin Moore Shaker Beige. "I love the idea of entering colorful rooms from sand-colored spaces," says designer Jason Bell.



LISA CREGAN: What you've done with color in this Connecticut house is a nature lover's dream, sort of deep blue sea mixed with southwestern sunset. Where did this dazzling mix come from?

JASON BELL: I've never done anything quite like this before, but I based every color in the house on an old framed needlepoint that says 'Why Hurry? There's time enough for everything.' It was super inspirational—very upbeat, filled with people, dogs, and kids, just brimming with life. It reminded me of the life of this house, four children under the age of 13 running in and out, bicycles at the front door, huge old trees with tire swings, lounging and dining on porches.

Did you find it in an antiques store?

No, right here! The clients bought the house completely furnished—every single lamp, every little dish in the cupboards. My associate Jon Moore and I updated about 80 percent of the furnishings—reupholstered, slipcovered, painted, rewired. And we got out our trusty Benjamin Moore fanbook, held it up to the needlepoint, matched the colors, and then tweaked them a bit to make them more modern.

Any other good finds here?

We grabbed that big pitcher out of a cabinet here and it's always on that entry table now. My client loves to go out and clip rhododendrons or hydrangeas and put them in there. No matter what she brings in from outside, it's amazing, it goes with the colors of the house.

So much color, and yet it doesn't hit you over the head. It's like a beautifully cultivated garden. Is that because it's mostly confined to the accessories, the fabrics? All the walls are neutral—white or beige.

Yes, we painted all rooms stark white, and the entry hall and every hallway a sand color. I like the idea of entering these colorful rooms from sand-colored spaces. When you stand here and you see the brick color inside the living room bookshelves on one side of the foyer, and that great expanse of navy fabric on the family room sofa on the other, you're pulled into the house. The strong swaths of color have impact because they're such a contrast to the stark white walls.

The same way you're pulled into the kitchen by the turquoise background of the butler's pantry.

Exactly. Painting the inside turquoise is the same idea as painting the inside of the bookcases brick. The color adds depth to what otherwise would have been a blob of white. It really highlights the collection of dishes and tins. If the background were just

white, the things in those cabinets wouldn't have any impact at all. They would have gotten lost.

You use the same chrysanthemum fabric in the family room and on the porch, in different colors. Why?

It helps the rooms flow together. It keeps the house super calm because the pattern stays the same—only the colors change, depending on the palette of the rooms. Aquamarine chrysanthemums in the living room, pale blue and navy in the family room, and coral on the porch.

And it's a nice contrast with the darker furniture. Such a fresh look.

It's such a fresh fabric. The last thing we wanted was for your eye to focus on these old mahogany pieces that have been here for the last hundred years! That's where a balance of color came in. Your eye is drawn to the fabric and you're tricked into focusing on the more fun things in the room, not the dark furniture.

Besides using the fabric in more than one room, you also used the same ottoman style in the living room and family room.

We do ottomans a lot, and they're always on casters. You can put your feet up on them, put a tray on them, make a table or pull them into a group for extra seating. We knew they needed to have weight but be very pretty at the same time, so we did the nailhead thing and then we gave them skirts. We made them in navy for the family room and in that brick color for the living room.

It's safe to say that color is one of your strengths as a designer. What's your approach?

I always go with my gut.

And your advice?

Pick one thing, stick with it, and build off it. It could be a flowery chintz or a graphic pattern. The trick is to pick apart its colors. Rooms have to relate to each other or a house starts to look like a decorator showhouse. I adore decorator showhouses, but in a home I think it's best to find one thing that's inspirational, and don't waver.

This is one very happy house—not only filled with color, but flooded with light.

All the curtains are linen sheers. It was all about keeping the house wide open, having the sun pour in, feeling the wind off the water. A curtain fluttering in the breeze is so relaxing, like lying in a hammock. As the needlepoint says, 'Why hurry? There's time enough for everything.'

PRODUCED BY DORETTA SPERDUTO STYLIST TODD MOORE



The sofa and chairs, 40-year-old pieces that came with the house, were reupholstered in a chrysanthemum fabric, Chrysanthe, from Osborne & Little. The ottomans are covered in a Norbar cotton, Wink in brick. Bell used unlined linen panels for all the curtains in the house, to let in maximum natural light. The shell lamp is from English Country Antiques in Bridgehampton. Seashell prints are from Ballard Designs and Art.com. Natura sisal rug from Stark.





A color Bell calls "brick"—Benjamin Moore's Southwest Pottery—highlights living room bookshelves. "We used brick in two big clumps for balance," he says, "on the camelback sofa, and as a broad swath behind the shelves." OPPOSITE FROM TOP: The star-studded family room. The breezy side porch. The dining area of the family room; vintage chairs surround the Crate and Barrel table.





DETERGENT

CAKES

FLOUR

SNACKS

APPLES

25¢ per Basket

A Pottery Barn table is at the heart of the kitchen. "Those turquoise pendant lights are from Schoolhouse Electric—they're the perfect color and they're only about \$150 each! Colorful and affordable—that's the spirit of the entire house," says Bell. OPPOSITE: Shelves in the butler's pantry are painted Benjamin Moore South Beach.





The master bedroom's grasscloth bed is from Mecox Gardens. Bell topped Crate and Barrel swing arm lamps with kraft paper shades. OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The owners already had the coral bedding, so Bell had coral curtains made for the guest room. An armchair sits next to doors opening onto a porch. The brilliantly colored 8-by-3-foot needlepoint inspired the palette for the house. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES.

