

COMFORTABLE WITH COLOR

A Bessarabian kilim from Paige Albright Orientals brings red into the room, which is topped with a vibrant jade green ceiling. "The painted ceiling has this glow about it," decorator Fran Keenan says. "There's a warmth you feel in the space." The plaid blanket on the sofa "adds a fun retro vibe and keeps the seat cushion clean," Sara says. "Living with color and pattern is super forgiving—these fabrics camouflage the wear and tear."



doors: Leafy Bower,
Pratt & Lambert



Text by LACEY HOWARD / Photography by HECTOR SANCHEZ

Color Scheming

Decorator Sara Walker boldly mixes color, pattern, vintage items, and personal touches to create a comfortable, vibrant, perfectly imperfect home for her young family.



When Sara Walker, design assistant to local interior decorator Fran Keenan, and her husband, Chris, bought their Edgewood three-bedroom, one-bath home, they had an inspired vision to completely gut the house, rework the floorplan, and claim the idle attic space. And they did it all—creating a master suite on the main floor and adding four bedrooms and two baths upstairs—without adding a single square foot or even a dormer. "I love that we were able to get all the modern amenities within the beautiful old shell of a 1925 brick Tudor—it's the best of both worlds," Sara says.

Within the rooms, furnishings are a collection of inherited pieces, inexpensive antiques, thrift store scores, and estate sale finds—all from a spectrum of styles and eras. Sara's daring palette unites the rooms with a consistent thread of color. But choosing such vibrant, saturated hues wasn't a casual decision for the design pro. "It was a leap of faith, even for a color-lover like me!" she says.

THE MAGIC MIX

As a close friend and design mentor, Fran Keenan shares and appreciates Sara's love of color. "She has a rather fearless approach to color—we are like-minded in that," Fran says. "I love the combination of the greens we selected and how they play off the raspberry red, anchored with black and brown." Sara balances her savvy color scheme with interiors that stand up to real life. "I have embraced having an honest home that is full of things that are imperfect but all work together in a way that we love."

WHITE WALL CHALLENGE "Before we moved in, my husband thought Fran and I were nuts for choosing this bright green color for the ceiling," Sara says, "but he grew to love it after the rest of the furnishings were placed. It makes the whole room glow." The color was chosen from a floral Schumacher fabric that adorns the sofa's throw pillows. Furnishings, including an antique French bergere covered in a geometric Lee Jofa fabric, an open-arm chair found at a local thrift store and covered in a modern malachite fabric, and a red trunk from a local antiques mall, offer a mix of styles and eras.

ceiling: Green Drop, Pratt & Lambert



STARTING POINT "The color palette for the entire house started with a love affair with a Schumacher fabric called Shanghai Peacock," Sara says of the pillows on the living room sofa. "It launched a palette of jades, mints, citrons, and shots of red." She credits Fran with teaching her the beauty of using a cohesive color palette in every room throughout the house. "Usually your favorite color is still your favorite color when it's in your house," Fran says. Vintage wicker stools from Homewood Antiques sit on casters to allow for versatile seating. The Eastlake Victorian mirror over the sofa (see opposite page) belonged to Sara's grandmother. "I had my eye on it since I was a child and finally had it repaired and placed in this house," she says. Hand-pressed botanicals on either side of the mirror are from Chelsea Antiques.

VERDANT COCOON

The master bedroom's walls and trim are painted mint green. "A white or bright trim next to strong color amps up that color. Instead, we softened the vibrant wall color by using the same color on the trim," says Fran. "It makes the room feel sophisticated and really stylish." Sara capitalized on the local trend of moving away from red Orientals and snapped one up for a steal. "I loved going against the trend with this over-dyed red rug. The contrast of the mint and red really makes the room," Sara says. To complete the space, she added a Parsons bench wrapped in what she calls "a very 80s chintz."

ceiling: Greenage, Pratt & Lambert



ART WORKS

Sara pairs vintage art with new—like this collage of colorful pieces including some by her sister, local artist Liz Landgren. A trunk used by Sara's grandfather in World War II is topped by a trophy mount from Chris's youth. "I subscribe to the philosophy that if you love something enough, it will look good in your home," says Sara. "It's all about creating that custom mix that makes it feel distinctly you."



walls: Oak Glen, Pratt & Lambert





SETTING THE TABLE Drapes in a Greek key print douse the dining room in pattern, while a garage sale artwork score (a signed original!) adds color to a small expanse of white wall. An oversize Restoration Hardware lantern, painted red for a bold visual, holds court over an antique French farm table from Gabby Home. "Signed Thonet chairs in their original striped vinyl were purchased at a local antiques mall for a song!" Sara says of host chairs by German furniture maker Michael Thonet. A painted-to-unite collection of vintage bentwood bistro chairs are the dining side chairs.

COUNTER CULTURE "Stairs are always the hardest part—the floorplan juggernaut," Fran says of finding a place on the main floor for the stairwell rising to the newly finished second floor. "And then the kitchen was a brain cramp. Sara wanted it to feel gracious enough to support the size of the house." Eventually, after many sketches, Sara nestled the stairs at one end of the kitchen and tucked counter seating beneath the rise of the stairs. For kitchen lighting, she went a different route than the usual canned lights. "I was inspired by some of interior designer Steven Gambrel's kitchens where he used flush-mount lighting on a grid. With some very modestly sourced lighting and a can of brassy spray paint, I achieved this look," Sara says.



Kitchen & dining walls:
French Canvas, Benjamin Moore

resources: designers: **SARA WALKER AND FRAN KEENAN** frankeenan.com builder: **COTTON CONSTRUCTION** cottonconstructioninc.com windows: **HOLCOMBE DOORS AND WINDOWS** holcombedoorandwindow.com windowpane trim color throughout house: **PRATT & LAMBERT FIELD GRAY** prattandlambert.com hardware and restoration of vintage hardware **BRANDINO BRASS** brandinobrass.com kitchen: cabinets: **CANNON CUSTOM WOODWORK INC.:** 205.296.3745 cabinet color: **BENJAMIN MOORE PARIS RAIN** benjaminmoore.com countertops: **TRITON STONE** tritonstone.com barstools: **SERENA & LILY** serenaandlily.com dining room: vintage striped thonet chairs: **HANNA ANTIQUES** hannaantiques.com cowhide rug: **PAIGE ALBRIGHT ORIENTALS** paigealbrightorientals.com living room: club chairs: **HILTZ LAUBER** hiltzlauber.com red trunk: **HANNA ANTIQUES** sofa: custom through **MCJ INTERIORS** 205.458.2700 hemp area rug: **PAIGE ALBRIGHT ORIENTALS** fabric on open-arm lounge chair: **DURALEE** duralee.com antique French console **ARGENT ANTIQUES** argentantiques.com vintage emerald lamp: **URBAN SUBURBAN ANTIQUES:** 205.592.0777 mid-century buoy lamps: **SCOTT ANTIQUE MARKET** scottantiquemarket.com wall color: **BENJAMIN MOORE FRENCH CANVAS** keeping room: wall color: **BENJAMIN MOORE FRENCH CANVAS** Italian chrome folding chair: **THE NEST** thenestbham.com rug: **PAIGE ALBRIGHT ORIENTALS** master bedroom: linen bedding: **RESTORATION HARDWARE AND WEST ELM** restorationhardware.com, westelm.com Parsons bench: **THE NEST** oriental rug: **CHELSEA ANTIQUES** chelseaantiques1.com