

Southern home



the
COLOR
issue



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PASSION FOR COLOR



Architect David Neumann and designer Kelley Proxmire teamed up to create a classic Virginia Colonial for a large family. Within the historically correct exterior, the duo gave the family all the interior comforts of modern, open-plan living.

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With five children, Mike and Julie Holmes knew they needed a house with lots of bedrooms and space to work and play. Designer Kelley Proxmire had helped the Holmeses with their previous house, and when they bought an empty lot in Vienna, Virginia, Proxmire introduced them to architect David Neumann, whose rigorously traditional houses grace the D.C. area. “The main requirement of six bedrooms drove the design of a fairly sizable house,” he says. “The rooms are framed, which allows for strong use of color because it can be contained.” Beautifully arched cased openings signal transitions without closing off rooms. Proxmire set about creating vibrant interiors that reflect the youthful exuberance of family life.

“The challenge of an open-plan design is to distinguish each space from the next,” says Proxmire of the palette she used to separate spaces that flow into one another. “I do a floor plan and a color scheme,” she says. “Then I figure out how to blend them and mix in neutrals and textures.” Fabric swatches help her work out the scale of patterns, but the overriding consideration for this project was

Previous pages: In the dining room, Brunschwig & Fils wallpaper sets a festive atmosphere for entertaining, with a chinoiserie mirror playing off the Oriental theme. In the library, Farrow & Ball’s Calke Green on the walls creates an oasis of peace and calm. Left and above: Proxmire’s artful use of color is on display in the foyer and dining room, with shots of yellow connecting the two spaces. Architect David Neumann’s Georgian front door leads into a cheerful wallpapered entry hall. The dining room’s color scheme takes its direction from the wallpaper.

A lively Scalamandré print on sofa pillows and an ottoman sets the palette of bright primary colors throughout the living room, this page. Built-in cabinets frame a niche for a second seating area, opposite top, with collected ceramics adorning the shelves. In the entry, opposite below, dark floors and woodwork give the staircase definition.



practicality. “With five kids and a dog, it had to be pretty but functional,” she says. Indoor/outdoor fabrics were a must, as well as polypropylene rugs used in high traffic areas.

The visitor gets a healthy dose of caution-flung-to-the-wind upon entering the house, with its elegant Georgian door opening into a chinoiserie confection of a foyer with jonquil yellow wallpaper lining the walls and staircase. “It is bold,” says Proxmire, “but it didn’t take much convincing to get Julie to agree.” The yellow carries through to the dining room as a counterpoint to the ebullient green chinoiserie wallpaper, lining the seats of upholstered dining chairs.

The living room is an indicator of all the colors in the house, with a Scalamandré floral print bringing red, blue, yellow, and green





In the family room, which connects to the living room through pretty arched openings, Proxmire's favorite color combination of blue and green energizes the gathering space. White grasscloth wallcovering is laminated and treated for stain resistance. The custom lampshade on a green gourd lamp adds a sense of fun. The game table gets frequent use from the five children.



The large kitchen is the hub of family activity, with two islands painted a vivid blue providing space for meals, crafts, and homework. Lanterns with a scalloped detail add a flourish overhead. The breakfast room, below, includes a banquette for flexible seating.





together, amid upholstery playing off all those colors. Julie Holmes helped collect the blue-and-white objects adorning the built-in cabinets that form a niche for a cozy seating arrangement. Unlike many formal living rooms, this one gets used due to the grand piano in the corner where the kids practice.

A master of mixing blue and green, Proxmire uses both to great effect in the family room with indigo chairs and fern green sofas, which energize the soothing white room. "I like to flip the primary colors so that no room is exactly the same as another," she says. In the paneled library, green takes center stage, with lacquered paneling and gray accents spiked with dashes of blue. In the kitchen, blue reigns with cabinets painted cobalt and a pair of islands offering space for both meals and homework.

In the children's bedrooms, personal preferences dictate the intensity of the palette, with some choosing soft pastels and others opting for bold hues. They're all pretty and all parent-approved, but each reflects the occupant's taste in a wonderfully specific manner. Proxmire discussed animal-themed art with one daughter, and by her next visit, the girl showed Proxmire a collection of anthropomorphic dog prints she'd sourced from Etsy. In every room, Proxmire wove a narrative of the family's story told through pattern, color, and love.



Opposite: Each child had design input for their bedroom, with some choosing vivid hues and others soft pastels. A pair of Juju hats sourced from Etsy hang over twin beds in one room. Top: In the parents' room, top, fresh green fabrics play off subdued blues for a restful retreat. Above: On the terrace, rattan furniture by Celerie Kemble for Lane Venture gives a retro vibe with boldly striped cushions.