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the timeless appeal of blue & white

WITH A RICH RANGE
OF HUES, THIS CLASSIC COMBINATION
LOOKS FRESHER THAN EVER

INTERIOR DESIGN Lee Ann Thornton INTERVIEW Barbara King PHOTOGRAPHY James Merrell PRODUCER Doretta Sperduto

Designer Lee Ann Thornton made blue and white the prevailing theme of a new Greenwich, Connecticut, house on the Long Island Sound to impart both a classic look and a coastal feeling. She added splashes of yellow in the living room, painted in Benjamin Moore's White Dove, to heighten its "happy" mood. The ottoman, long pillow, and chairs at the window are upholstered in Robert Kime's Susani, and the custom sofa and armchair are in C&C Milano's Bolgheri. Paul Ferrante's Angelo chandelier.



In the dining room, the misty blue background on the custom Gracie wallpaper sets off the sparkle of mirrored panels, Price Glover sconces, the Charles Edwards Hanging Round Frieze chandelier, and a Regency table by Rose Tarlow Melrose House. John Rosselli klismos chairs have seats covered in Garrett Leather with backs in Fortuny's Cimarosa. Curtains in Fortuny's Tapa trimmed with a Samuel & Sons border. Shyam Ahuja rug.





BARBARA KING: It looks like there's a link between your color scheme and the landscape outside the windows.

LEE ANN THORNTON: You're right. I do it all the time; I can't help it. I'm influenced by the colors of the exterior, from the clouds in the sky to the brown of tree bark. It's so simple a recipe, but I like to do it in a nuanced way, nothing jarringly obvious or obtrusive. I think it's because I grew up in Los Angeles, where there's such a strong connection between the indoors and the outdoors—I always fuse a relaxed California approach with elegant New England tradition.

What influenced you most here? This house is on the Long Island Sound in Greenwich, Connecticut; the architect, Douglas VanderHorn, designed it so that there are views of the water from almost every room. It just felt right to use blue throughout for a coastal look, although not a nautical one—no marine or navy blue. Plus, it's my clients' favorite color, and it was already prominently featured in their artwork. But it was a happy coincidence, because blue and white are my signature colors—my obsession, really. Why are they so compelling to you? They're clean, classic, incredibly inviting, and I'll take them any way I can get them—in fabrics, pottery, dinnerware, flowers, you name it. You've covered your bases here, alright.

And isn't it wonderful? Just look at the different moods that are evoked by using different shades of blue. That misty blue on the Gracie wallpaper in the dining room is so romantic. Because it's muted, it tones down the formality of the room. It also set off all the little sparkles that I wanted to happen, that I feel a dining room deserves, like the polished silver chandelier and the antique mirrored panels surrounding the fireplace. The deep lacquered blue in the butler's pantry is sharp and dramatic—it makes the eye dance. The indigos in the library feel serious and masculine. The soft aquas in the master bedroom are utterly calming, and the manner in which the light hits the Venetian plaster—



darker, lighter, darker, lighter—gives the walls so much movement, like water. That room really feels like the outside. The silver threads in the blue-green wallcovering in the teenage daughter's room have feminine glamour. So each room, as you can see, has its own personality. What's the personality of the living room?

Cheery, joyful. You just can't walk in without thinking, This feels good. I brought in pops of yellow that are like little bursts of sunshine and perfect punches of happiness. We fell in love with that Robert Kime suzani print the minute we saw it. The yellow Fortuny pillows on the living room sofa are the perfect accompaniment to the suzani. Fortuny colors—and patterns—are so ravishing. You could have them all over your house and never tire of them.

And let's not overlook the family room. What word would you use to describe it?

Oh, it's all about fun! I pushed the envelope by covering the walls and banquette in the same fabric, with

ABOVE: Farrow & Ball's Down Pipe on the island cabinetry grounds the otherwise all-white kitchen. Pendant lights, the Urban Electric Co. **OPPOSITE:** In the adjoining family room, Thornton covered the walls and sectional in the same fabric, Quadrille's Persepolis: "I wanted the space to feel more hip and fun," she says. The ottoman is covered in Martyn Lawrence Bullard's Kabba Kabba. Inca carpet, Patterson Flynn Martin.

its touches of denim blue. I went for a hipper vibe in that room because there are four children in the family, and I wanted it to appeal to them, to be a place where they would hang with their friends. And the pops of red give it even more pizzazz.

I'll often throw in red for a touch of Americana. Blue, white, and red—it's a timeless combination.

That color on the kitchen island has a mysterious aspect to it. It's hard to pin down.

Yes, it's very elusive. It's Farrow & Ball's Down Pipe, a color I adore and use all the time. It seems to shift tones depending on the light, from bluish gray to greenish gray to charcoal to metallic. It just says so much. And it's a lovely counterpoint to all the white.

You used the same white paint, Benjamin Moore's White Dove, throughout the house. Why that one in particular?

It's my go-to white, a tried-and-true, foolproof shade that never disappoints. It's one of the gentle whites, soft and warm with no undertones—it doesn't go yellow, it doesn't go blue, it doesn't go gray, it just goes white. When you've got so many things going on the way I seem to when I decorate, you don't have time to worry if there's going to be a hue coming through that you don't want. It's a nice, clean backdrop for art.

There are a lot of deep, strong browns in the house, too.

Rich browns ground all the other colors. Brown is a great connector, and it looks good with blue, with white, with green, with pink—you can't go wrong.

Is there a color you wouldn't go near? Tan. It would never complement my interiors, never. I couldn't even contemplate bringing it into my blue-and-white world, where I am so totally happy.

Are you happy with this house?

It's pure romance. While it's newly built, the design is based on early-20th-century East Coast styles and looks as if it's been here all along. The interior is luxurious and chic, but at the same time comfortable, warm, and charming. The rooms say, 'Please come in, enjoy.'



Dark browns and blues convey a masculine aura in the library. Cherrywood walls are accented with a custom blue paint. Barclay Butera's Hair on Hide on the BeeLine Home ottoman adds a graphic note. Victoria club chairs by Rose Tarlow Melrose House are upholstered in Carolina Irving Textiles' Patmos Stripe. The sofa, designed by Thornton, is covered in a Cowtan & Tout linen velvet. Robert Kime's Ibrahim was used for the curtains and the chairs at the window.







1. Classical architectural details in the entry set the tone for the rest of the house. 2. Paul Ferrante's Baguès-style sconce is a glittery counterpoint to the rustic air of the powder room, clad in Maya Romanoff's Weathered Walls, which resembles bark. 3. A daughter's bedroom is all feminine glamour. She loves pink, but Thornton gave her a bolder version: vivid fuchsia. The bed, upholstered in Raoul Textiles' Chunari, plays off the silver-threaded grass cloth, Glam Grass by Phillip Jeffries. Jonathan Adler stools. 4. Lee Ann Thornton. 5. The butler's pantry, which connects the dining room to the kitchen, is lacquered in a custom blue. The Charles Edwards pendant lights have shades made of Fortuny's Solimena. 6. Designed by architect Douglas VanderHorn, the house is built of Connecticut fieldstone and cedar shingles. 7. A cozy reading spot and a work area are nestled into niches in the daughter's room. Shades are in Tulu's Kezban. Elle chair, Ballard Designs. **OPPOSITE:** The palette in the master bedroom picks up the colors outdoors. Venetian plaster walls are in a custom aqua. Armchairs are upholstered in Peter Fasano's Hampshire, and the curtains are in Robert Kime's Trebizond. John Robshaw bed linens. **FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES**



