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**Paint This!**

Dressers, Chairs, Nightstands and More

# True Blue

A dated home gets a contemporary overhaul with a sea-inspired palette of blue and gray.

BY KATHLEEN BIRMINGHAM  
STYLING BY PAOLA McDONALD  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG TINIUS/TINIUS PHOTOGRAPHY



Before

WHEN PRINCIPAL DESIGNER PAOLA McDONALD OF OLAMAR INTERIORS FIRST MET with her clients to discuss a redesign of their condo, the homeowners feared turning their traditional home into a lighter, brighter space with a more contemporary design might be too difficult a job.

But Paola welcomed such a challenge. "Many people are tired of a traditional design that feels heavy with a lot of things packed in a room," she says. "They're looking for a clean, open and purposeful design. My job is to clean up the lines, making sure that everything in a space serves a purpose or is meaningful to the homeowner. That's what a contemporary design needs to have."

The large coffee table that is meant to look like railroad ties has a shimmery silver-leaf finish, which offsets the heaviness of the piece and reflects light. Mirrors with scroll patterns are a good choice in contemporary design, as they make the space feel bigger.

After



"Don't be tempted to go small just **because the space is small.** You often end up with the **opposite effect.**"

In addition, Paola says that a lot of contemporary designs today incorporate classic lines done in a new way—cleaner and crisper. Throughout this project, she chose colors reminiscent of the beach, using various shades of cream and blue, and incorporating a strategic use of reflective materials like mirrors and paint to make the space appear larger.

Paola achieved a sense of continuity by incorporating a geometric scroll design that is represented throughout the entire home in upholstery fabrics, area rugs, mirrors, the kitchen backsplash and even on wallpaper in various niches.



Before

The dining table and chairs have a slightly traditional look, but everything else in the dining room is modern. The space successfully blends light and color, while displaying special objects with meaning to the homeowners.

After





This formal area for entertaining provides comfortable seating for guests. The sofa upholstery, carpet and end tables all feature a scroll pattern that ties together the look. An expandable coffee table gives guests a place to set down beverages.

The dining room features a traditional-looking table and chairs, but the rest of the room carries tall, slender contemporary design elements, such as an *étagère* along the wall. The large buffet makes the small space appear larger because of its light color.

"Some pieces should be larger in a small space; they are very functional and make the space feel larger," Paola says. "Don't be tempted to go small just because the space is small. You often end up with the opposite effect."

When the homeowner wanted to remove the original window coverings (slatted wooden shutters), Paola decided to soften the window appearance with flowing white curtains, complemented by an unexpected touch of dark color in the curtain rods. Because there were a few elements in the space that were dark, like the dining room chairs, accent table and the legs of the chairs, adding the curtain rods tied together every element as part of the design.

All the materials were chosen to bounce the light and create a bright environment. The large shelving unit provides very spacious storage for office supplies and home décor.



After



Paint your cabinets and change the backsplash for an inexpensive facelift. This backsplash replaced a ho-hum gray with a white scroll pattern and bright, white grout.

After

The most drastic change to the home comes from an update to the fireplace wall, which Paola transformed from a very heavy stone veneer to a much brighter, quartz-like finish, opening up the family room through to the office in an area that previously felt choppy and closed in. Glass shelves in the pass-through niches provide additional light, reflection and a place to display artwork.

Before



Before

I'm not a matchy-matchy designer, where everything feels like it was bought at the same time from the same place. I want to develop the feeling of a home that was created over time," Paola says. When renovating, think of long-term solutions that won't go out of style and make the most of your home.

Not only were the homeowners pleased with the design, they discovered upon re-evaluating their real estate that Paola's work netted a much higher appraisal value.

See Shopping Guide, page 128.

Before



Despite a lack of matching elements in the bedroom, the design is unified by a custom frame, which mimics the finish on the dresser.



After



After



Before



## Contemporary Style on a Budget

Designer Paola McDonald's tips for stylish spaces without breaking the bank.

- **Know What to Keep:** Contemporary style doesn't mean you have to start with a clean slate and buy everything new. Instead, I recommend keeping furniture pieces that work well for my clients. Incorporating existing pieces into a contemporary design is a matter of choosing fabrics, colors and accessories that allow them to blend into the new design.
- **Restore or Revamp:** Consider your entire space. If you have wood floors, you can save quite a bit of money by refinishing them rather than installing something new. In the kitchen, carefully consider what needs to be replaced and what might need a mere facelift. In this project, we replaced heavy, dark granite countertops with lighter and brighter quartz. But everything else was still in very good condition, so we merely painted the cabinets and island coordinating colors of gray and installed a new faucet. Everything else was original to the pre-designed plan.
- **Paint Like a Pro:** One of my best tips for staying within a budget is to choose paint that really works with your design. In this project, we used a single color from Benjamin Moore Color Stories. This worked very well because each wall had different amounts of natural light hitting it, which made it look as if they were all painted a different but coordinating color. Using a single color paint in this way, we created a very unified look throughout the home.



For more information on designer Paola McDonald of Damar Interiors, visit [damarinteriors.com](http://damarinteriors.com).