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# D LIVING COLOR

A vibrant palette, bold wallpaper patterns and classic MCM features create an exuberant atmosphere in this new build designed for a couple longing to recapture the nostalgia of their childhoods.

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Photographed by **Diana Paulson**

Designed by **Elin Walters, Exactly Designs**

A VIBRANT SET OF VINTAGE DINING CHAIRS DESIGNED BY EERO SAARINEN WAS PART OF THE CLIENTS' COLLECTION, AND ELIN DESIGNED THE ROOM AROUND THE CHAIRS' HAPPY HUE.







BOTH THE WALLPAPER AND RUG HAVE THEIR OWN STATEMENT PRINTS, BUT THEY STILL WORK WELL TOGETHER. “THE COLORS MAKE THIS PAIRING COHESIVE, ALONG WITH THE FACT THAT THEY HAVE GEOMETRIC PATTERNS,” ELIN EXPLAINS. “SOMETIMES, YOU JUST INSTINCTUALLY KNOW WHEN THEY’LL WORK—AND I CAN’T EVEN EXPLAIN WHY.”

**FOR MANY,** Mid Century Modern style has an inviting aura.

Such is the case for Andrea and Mark Brimmer, a couple that longed for a custom dream build that reminded them of their childhood homes.

“They both grew up in places with a heavy Mid Century Modern influence,” says Elin Walters, owner and principal designer of Exactly Designs. “The aesthetic takes them back to their childhood and makes them feel warm and happy.”

For the new construction, the couple chose an idyllic spot that boasts 200 feet of frontage and 2 acres on Lake Ponemah in Fenton, Michigan. Renowned architect Karl Jasinski had recently retired, but when asked to design the home, he agreed, making it the culminating project of a storied career.

Elin was also brought on immediately.

“I was most excited about being involved in the project from day one,” she explains. “Architectural plans had been drawn, and then I was called in to help pick out all the finishes, inside and out. Having this much influence on the entire home was very exciting!”

**ABOVE, RIGHT:** YELLOW FLOOR TILES WERE CHOSEN AS AN INTRODUCTION TO YELLOW FOR THIS BACK ENTRY, WHILE THE BUILT-IN WAS DESIGNED TO BE PRACTICAL—BUT FUN. “POPS OF COLOR IN THE OPEN COMPARTMENTS SUGGEST A PALM SPRINGS VIBE TO MIRROR THE ART ON THE WALL,” ELIN SAYS. “THE COLORFUL, WALNUT-BACKED HOOKS PICK UP THE COLORS IN THE BUILT-IN.”

**RIGHT:** ELIN LET THE VIEW OF NEARBY LAKE PONEMAH BE THE ART, SO HER DESIGN INTENT WAS TO AVOID OBSTRUCTING OR DETRACTING FROM IT. “GREENS AND BLUES IN THE DESIGN REFLECT THE COLORS OF THE TREES AND THE WATER,” SHE SAYS.







WOOD PANELS STAINED IN A WALNUT FINISH AND SET IN A GRID PATTERN WITH PAINTED BLACK “CHANNELS” ADD DIMENSION TO THE MAIN LIVING ROOM. “MY CLIENTS KNEW THAT THEY WANTED WOOD-PANELED ROOMS IN THEIR HOUSE BECAUSE THEY HAVE A LOVE FOR MID CENTURY MODERN HOMES; IN ADDITION, THIS FEATURE IS COMMON,” ELIN NOTES.

OPPOSITE, TOP: LOCATION, FORM AND FUNCTION ALL INTERSECT IN THE KITCHEN. BECAUSE THE HOUSE SITS ON A LAKE, ELIN ANGLED THE KITCHEN ISLAND, AS WELL AS THE PERIMETER CABINETS, SO BOTH THE LAKE AND THE LIVING ROOM ARE VISIBLE. “THE KITCHEN HAS ALL THE THINGS A KITCHEN NEEDS. HOWEVER, BY COMBINING LOTS OF COLOR WITH THE WARMTH OF THE WOOD, THE SPACE IS MUCH MORE THAN SIMPLY FUNCTIONAL,” SHE SAYS.



BELOW, LEFT: THE GUEST BATHROOM SERVICES ALL THREE BEDROOMS IN THIS WING OF THE HOUSE. BECAUSE HER CLIENTS LOVED THIS GREEN TILE, ELIN BUILT THE ROOM AROUND IT AND DESIGNED FOR A STRIPE OF THE TILE TO RUN DOWN THE WHITE TILE. IT’S AN EYE-CATCHING WAY TO SHOWCASE THE VIBRANT HUE AND IS ALSO BUDGET-FRIENDLY. “THE TILE IS QUITE PRICEY PER SQUARE FOOT, SO THIS IS A WAY TO USE IT DYNAMICALLY WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK,” ELIN POINTS OUT.

BELOW, RIGHT: IT’S ALWAYS IMPORTANT TO BE AWARE OF WATER EXPOSURE IN BATHROOMS—PARTICULARLY WHEN IT COMES TO WALLPAPER. LUCKILY, ELIN IS AN EXPERT AND KNOWS EXACTLY HOW TO NAVIGATE WALLPAPER IN A BATHROOM SETTING. “THIS WALLPAPER IS SMOOTH, REMOVABLE PAPER WITH A SLIGHT SHEEN, MAKING IT EASY TO WIPE DOWN. AND, BECAUSE THE WALL ISN’T IN THE SHOWER AREA, THERE’S NO CONCERN FOR MOISTURE HARMING IT,” SHE SAYS.







HOMEOWNER ANDREA LOVES THIS YELLOW STOVE, AND SO ELIN USED IT AS THE INITIAL BUILDING BLOCK IN DESIGNING THE KITCHEN. "I CHOSE TURQUOISE TILE TO CONTRAST WITH THE YELLOW AND DECIDED TO MAKE THIS WALL THE FOCAL POINT OF THE KITCHEN BY CREATING AN ENTIRE WALL OF COLOR," ELIN SAYS.

**BELOW:** IN THE CORNER OF THE MASTER BEDROOM, A FLOOR PLANT, VINTAGE-STYLE RADIO AND VARIOUS ACCESSORIES CREATE AN INVITING FEEL. "THE SHOES WERE PULLED FROM MY CLIENTS' AMAZING CLOSET ON THE DAY OF THE SHOOT," ELIN SAYS. "I LOVE THE CONTRAST IN COLOR THAT IT BROUGHT JUST FOR THE MOMENT."



**ABOVE:** BEAMS EXTEND THROUGH ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MASTER BEDROOM'S WALL, FORMING THE CEILING TO THE MAIN LIVING ROOM. "BOTH ROOMS HAVE LARGE, WALNUT PANEL WALLS, AND THE BEAMS HELP 'LOWER' THE CEILING, WHICH CREATES WARMTH AND INTEREST," ELIN EXPLAINS.



### EYE TO THE PAST

Similar to Andrea and Mark, Elin also had a childhood imbued with Mid Century Modern design. "My parents, who were antiques collectors and dealers, introduced me to the genre," she says. "There is much to love about it. I personally love that Mid Century Modern design is clean, simple, geometric and full of natural light and warmth through the use of wood." Elin had free rein to design as she wished—with excited buy-in from the owners: "We collaborated as we went. They had some things they knew they wanted to incorporate, but they honestly were so excited with all my choices. Such a dream for me!" she says.





## VIBRANT VIBES

Patterns added so much personality to this project; and, when they are as outsized, graphic and colorful as the ones Elin selected, they show an ebullient side to Mid Century Modern design.

However, the thought of implementing them in your own home can be overwhelming. Here, Elin shares her top tips for doing it right:

- **Stay focused.** Keep the focus simple. “Too many patterns at one time can be distracting to the eye,” Elin says. Stick to one or two for a single space.
- **Cohesive colors.** Coordinate colors so that there’s flow within the room. By making sure all the colors match and relate to each other, your spaces will automatically feel cohesive.
- **Starting point.** Build the overall design of a room using one item as your starting place. “This can be the pattern in a wallpaper or the pattern in a rug or pillow,” Elin says. Create your design around your inspiration item’s colors, shapes or style.
- **Be bold.** Don’t be afraid to be bold. Elin says, “Have confidence, create a cohesive space, and the bold will work.”
- **Go geometric.** “Geometric’ is a good search word,” Elin notes. “Search for products under this descriptor for compelling patterns.”



**ABOVE, LEFT:** THE SIDE TABLE WAS ALREADY PART OF THE CLIENTS’ COLLECTION, AND ELIN CHOSE TO PLACE IT IN THIS ROOM, BECAUSE THE TRIANGULAR BRASS LEGS COMPLEMENT THE GOLD STARBURSTS IN THE WALLPAPER DESIGN. ECHOING THE STARBURST DESIGN, THE TABLE LAMPS BRING THEM TO LIFE THREE DIMENSIONALLY, COMPLETING THE ROOM’S SUBTLE “GALAXY” THEME.

**ABOVE, RIGHT:** ELIN ENJOYS THE CONTRAST OF THE WARM WOOD DRESSER WITH THE COOLER METAL FINISHES ON THE DÉCOR PIECE. “AS WITH THE COMBINATION OF THE WALNUT BED AND THE STARBURST WALLPAPER, THIS PAIRING CREATES COHESION IN THE ROOM,” SHE SAYS.

**LEFT:** THE HOMEOWNERS HAD PURCHASED THIS VINTAGE DRESSER AND KNEW THEY WANTED TO TURN IT INTO A VANITY. THEY ALSO OWNED THE MIRRORS AS WELL. “BY FIRST PUTTING THESE TWO ELEMENTS TOGETHER, I WAS ABLE TO SLOT IN FIXTURES AND TILES THAT I THOUGHT WORKED WITH THE LINES,” ELIN NOTES. “AND, I FELT THAT TUCKING THE WALL-MOUNTED FAUCET INTO THE ARC AT THE BOTTOM OF THE MIRROR WAS A NATURAL PLACEMENT.” THE ROUND SINKS AND GLOBE LIGHTS SOFTEN THE LINEAR QUALITY OF THE HEXAGONAL FLOOR AND WALL TILES. WALNUT AND WHITE TOGETHER PROVIDE A NEUTRAL BACKDROP FOR THE STAR OF THE SHOW—THE FLOOR TILE.



ANOTHER GUEST BEDROOM IS DESIGNATED FOR ONE OF THE COUPLE’S SONS WHEN HE VISITS. “MOST ROOMS IN THE HOUSE HAVE VERY HIGH CEILINGS BECAUSE THE HOUSE IS BUILT WITH A SERIES OF ANGLED ROOFS,” ELIN SAYS. “THE BOLD WALLPAPER WAS CHOSEN BECAUSE OF ITS MORE ‘MANLY’ FEEL. THE BLACK-AND-WHITE COLOR PALETTE PROVIDES A NEUTRAL BACKGROUND FROM WHICH THE YELLOW POPS.”





## WALLS OF COLOR

The owners' wish list included high ceilings, expansive living areas and lots of square footage to host family and friends. Traditionally, Mid Century Modern homes are not quite as grand in scale, so Elin chose materials that were period-appropriate nods to the era. She also brought a historically sensitive creativity to the project and filled the home with unexpected uses of color and wall treatments.

"Color is 'my thing,' hence the reason this place is so alive!" she says. "And when I have an audience who appreciates it, I run with it."

The colors are prisms through a variety of wall treatments, such as bodacious wallpapers and textured tiles.

"To me, wallpaper is equivalent to art on the wall. It brings color, pattern and energy to a room in an all-consuming way," Elin shares.

THIS BEDROOM IS FOR GUESTS BUT IS USED BY THE COUPLE'S DAUGHTER WHEN SHE'S HOME FROM COLLEGE. SHE REQUESTED PINK, AND ELIN DECIDED TO PAIR IT WITH A SOFT CHARTREUSE AS A CONTRASTING COLOR. "GREENS ARE USED THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE, SO THE CHARTREUSE CHOICE HELPED TIE IN THIS ROOM WITH THE OVERALL HOUSE DESIGN," SHE NOTES.



ABOVE RIGHT: WALNUT IS USED FOR THE VANITIES AND DOORS IN THE BATHROOM, AND A BOLD GREEN IS IMPLEMENTED VIA THE WALLPAPER AND THE BACKSPLASH TILES. "HERE, YOU GET TO ENJOY THE JUXTAPOSITION OF THE BOLD GREEN WITH THE DEPTH OF THE WOOD," ELIN SAYS.

RIGHT: "AS MY CLIENT REMARKED WHEN THE POWDER ROOM WAS FULLY FINISHED, 'THIS IS THE "BOUGIE-IST" POWDER ROOM I'VE EVER SEEN!'" ELIN SAYS. THE WALLPAPER WAS THE FIRST MATERIAL CHOSEN FOR THE POWDER ROOM, AND EVERYTHING ELSE WAS DESIGNED AROUND THOSE COLORS AND SHAPES. "I THOUGHT THE TILE NOT ONLY PULLED OUT THE GREENS OF THE WALLPAPER BUT ALSO ECHOED THE SHAPE IN THE WALLPAPER PATTERN. THE PATTERN ALSO MATCHES THE SCALLOPS IN THE VINTAGE BROYHILL 'BRASILIA' DRESSER-TURNED-VANITY."

The common theme of the wallpapers in this home is geometry; they provide a simple, balanced, mid-mod feel to the contemporary layout.

Elin's design is a remarkable addition to the Mid Century Modern canon. With its colors, wall treatments, warm use of wood and spacious layout, the home is a bold step into the future while honoring the past and Mid Century Modern style. For Andrea and Mark, the home has the nostalgia of their childhoods, along with a distinct, fashionable sensibility that's all their own. 🌿

