

Decorating



THE LAYERED LOOK

Denver's Duet Design Group takes a small Cheesman Park condo from blank canvas to vibrant home by following a few key design rules. —JULIE DUGDALE



➔ THIS CHEESMAN PARK CONDO WAS THE perfect choice for homeowner Len Keating: historic building, great neighborhood, two bedrooms, not too big. But the 1,343-square-foot space needed a start-from-scratch decor overhaul—something Keating knew he couldn't tackle alone. Enter Duet Design Group's Devon Tobin and Miranda Cullen, who set out to transform the nondescript condo into an elegant, masculine-meets-preppy space. "We used fabrics to give it a Ralph Lauren, East Coast vibe and added a few heavier, rustic furnishings to balance it out," Tobin says. Here, the designers' top tips for designing big and bold in a small space.

FEAR NOT WALLPAPER

Previous page and above: Wallpaper is the perfect style backdrop because it can serve different purposes in each room. "In the dining room, the wallpaper [Changing Guards by Lizzie Allen] is art," designer Devon Tobin says. "In the great room, it's texture. The silk grasscloth [by John Brooks] contrasts with the walls [Concord Ivory by Benjamin Moore] to bring newness to the space."



GO FOR CUSTOM FURNITURE

Left: Furniture can overwhelm small spaces. Here, homeowner Len Keating wanted a lot of seating for entertaining, but off-the-shelf pieces just wouldn't fit. Solution? Designers Tobin and Miranda Cullen hired a custom furniture-maker to build and upholster smaller-scale pieces. Custom seating includes the head chairs in the dining room (upholstered in Schumacher's Luberon Plaid) and the pair of side chairs in the living room (upholstered in Schumacher's Imperial Trellis II).





Pillow Talk

Three rules for perfectly layered throw pillows.

Scale: Too many big shapes or too many tiny prints on top of each other are “tough on the eyes,” says Tobin. “Make sure the patterns scale down.” In the living room, the antlers are a big; the florals read medium; and the plaid feels small.

Color: If your base is neutral, you have carte blanche to go with bold colors and graphic accents, but make sure you choose a grounding color. Start with the solid block, then build more delicate patterns, such as florals, on top—as long as you have a splash of that grounding shade. The color in common will tie your pieces together, Tobin says.

Print: Add panache by mixing in patterns that are unexpected. Florals don’t always feel feminine, especially if they find counterpoints in bold, graphic, masculine prints like, say, antlers or plaid. Not feeling quite so daring? Consider a graphic take on a floral, such as the trellis print on the pair of living room armchairs.

STICK WITH A COLOR

Bottom left and below: Continuity in your home’s color palette provides a cohesive feel, Tobin says. Throughout the condo, she kept one scheme in mind: “The client’s style lent itself to saturated reds, yellows, and blues.” But, she says, colors don’t have to match perfectly. Some variety makes for greater interest. Steal a page from her playbook with the office combo: The walls are painted in Benjamin Moore’s Serenata; window treatments are Lee Jofa Sassari Ikat. 🏠

FIGURE OUT FUNCTION

Above: “Think about how you’ll use a room before deciding how you want it to look,” Tobin says. For the master bedroom, Keating’s request was that it be a “calm, sophisticated oasis.” With this in mind, the designers chose varying shades of blue and tonal whites for the decor. They avoided red entirely (even though it’s a common theme elsewhere in the house) because it can be an energizing color. Above the bed (which was built by an Amish craftsman in Pennsylvania) a painting of a coastal scene reinforces the relaxing vibe. Custom bedding (by Donghia) offers a fresh take on the classic stripe.

