





At the age of 25, Chicago designer Summer Thornton is esteemed by clients for her bold restraint, and the way she wields drop-dead wallpapers and fabrics, graphic patterns and opulent decorative objects. "I use color and pattern as a starting point and mix them up. But then I add a few well-chosen antiques as accents, say a frothy chandelier or anything silver... especially elegant old champagne buckets. They make such elegant planters or vases," she says.

The results—classic rooms with a modern edge—are reminiscent of the interior designers she admires most, Kelly Wearstler and Miles Redd, yet also play to her clients: "For a couple who is very modern and streamlined, I was restrained and used pieces with very clean lines. But then we did one wall in metallic chinoiserie wallpaper, which shook the whole place up," she explains. Not surprisingly, the willowy Thornton cut her teeth at the Chicago showroom of the classic yet kicky British design firm Osborne & Little, before starting her own design practice. In Thornton's

own 700-square-foot Lincoln Park apartment she shares with husband Josh Thornton, she proves she also knows how to make a little go a long way when necessary. Despite its plush panache, complete with lavishly printed wallpapers in each room, Thornton admits she did things economically, making many of the cushions and all the window treatments herself. "We put up the wallpaper together. And even though it was really expensive stuff, we only used one roll in the living room and five in the bedroom," she reveals. "We were lucky. The apartment was a blank shell when we bought it, so we were able to detail it as we liked."

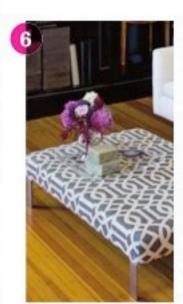
—Lisa Skolnik

ACCESSORY TO DESIGN! Clockwise: Thornton has a weakness for silver candlesticks (1) and quirky objects, like this shiny gold-tone metal bank (3) she picked up at Urban Outfitters for its graphic lines. In the sweet circular bay windows (2) lined with windows, Thornton made the cushions and most of the pillows herself.





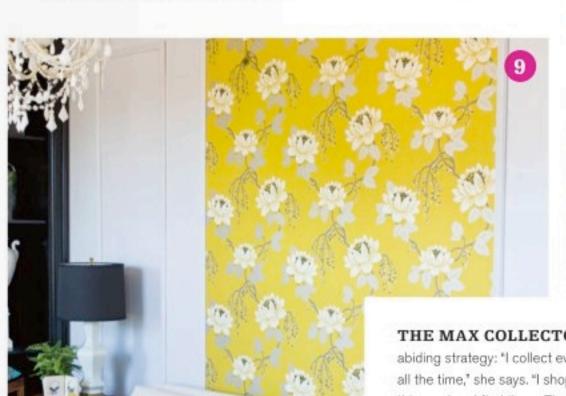
DIY TO THE HILT Thornton scored a prosaic little ottoman with plain little feet by Decorator's Guild at an Osborne & Little sample sale, then transformed it into a modernist inspired marvel by covering it with a slipcover made out of a classically mod trellis patterned fabric by Kelly Wearstler (6). "I made it myself with a few yards of fabric and some velcro," reveals the beyond-crafty designer.



4. Wallpaper in doses turn pedestrian walls posh. This metallic floral print is from Osborne & Little. 5. Thornton made these drapes from bedspreads she picked up at Urban Outfitters along with a Victorian console, once an acid orange display table she painted white. 7. Flea market antlers bring an organic feel to the vibrant use of color and pattern, while stacks of books and accessroies add interest.

THE HIT LIST In addition to scouring local flea markets, Thornton has a black book of shops she frequents that include George Lowell in Chicago (2920 N. Lincoln Ave.) for unique vintage and new accessories; Asahel Gridley Antique Shop in her hometown of Bloomington (215-219 E. Front St.) for heavy duty antique case goods; John Reeves (www. reevesd.com) for his quirky spin on traditionalism; and 1stdibs.com for luxe vintage lighting.

8. A glossy black, built-in shelving system maximizes storage, has a minimal footprint and masks a soffit that edges the ceiling. 9. Dramatic living room chandelier from Macy's Flea Market. 10. Traditional, neutral wing chair dressed up with Kelly Wearstler fabric pillow.



THE MAX COLLECTOR Thornton has one abiding strategy: "I collect everything, everywhere, all the time," she says. "I shop wherever I go, and buy things when I find them. Then I rotate them in and out of my rooms, because I'm easily bored." Her stockpile is long on funky vintage lamps that she dresses up or down with a new coat of paint or pretty shade; fabric fragments she crafts into pillows, cushions and window treatments; and vintage silver objects, from candlesticks to trays.



MENTOR MADNESS "I'm motivated by colors and fabrics; they're my starting point, so I always look to the work of Kelly Wearstler and Tricia Guild. Wearstler's patterns are saturated with color, and Guild has a reckless use of color, but both produce textiles that are fresh and forward. For upholstered pieces that blend with everything, I like Hickory Chair and Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams."

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