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Threads of purple, red, and blue-green weave through the apartment that designer Barrie Benson created for a color-loving client. In the living area, a solid peacock blue sofa grounds the mix of patterns and colorful accents.

COLOR WORKS

Interior designer **Barrie Benson** works like an archaeologist. She knows how to dig a little deeper, to use what's treasured, and to celebrate the stuff of life. See how she reveals the best of this New York apartment with color and an unlikely mix of furnishings.

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PRODUCED BY MONIKA BIEGLER EYERS

A large piece of art in a sleek white frame echoes the scale of the firebox and balances the detail of the carved surround. “I take inspiration from the way museums frame their art in a very simple way,” Benson says. Bud vases lined up at one end of the mantel provide a sense of depth while maintaining the gallery look.



WALL
ANTIQUE PEARL
2113-70
BENJAMIN
MOORE

A COLORFUL
CUSHION WITH
CONTRAST
PIPING UPDATES
AN HEIRLOOM.



DON'T WORRY
ABOUT MATCHING,
BENSON SAYS.
PICK THE RIGHT
FRAME
FOR THE ART.



You heard it here first: “This whole simplicity-is-better trend isn’t going to last,” predicts Charlotte designer Barrie Benson. “It doesn’t tell you enough about the person who lives there. It doesn’t tell a story.” In the New York apartment Benson designed for a friend, she knew the story her design needed to tell—one of a colorful Southern woman who loves her family, modern art, entertaining, and all shades turquoise, eggplant, and orchid. The owner’s art collection informed many design decisions, including the quiet pink-lavender paint on the living room walls. It gives the home a gallery look without being untouchable or stark. “This is the perfect neutral. It’s warm, it makes you look good, and it’s a little feminine,” Benson says. (“It” is Benjamin Moore’s Antique Pearl.) “I don’t try to match artwork to interiors, but when I look at the art a client owns, it inspires me and provides a lot of hints about what they love. Nothing says more about you than your art. It reflects your personality.” In this collection, bold fields of color appear again and again, a thread Benson repeated in richly saturated rugs and upholstery. All that color is balanced by softer tones on the walls and a mix of painted and natural wood finishes sprinkled throughout the apartment. Family heirlooms, such as Grandma’s cane chair in the living room, *left*, add history and sentimentality. “They make the design much more personal and special,” Benson says. “When you mix old pieces with the modern, you have a look that’s fresh and young and one that tells your story.”

To connect the living and dining areas, Benson started with a space-spanning sisal rug. The rug on top, she says, is where color comes in. “When you’re rug shopping, look for a work of art with color and pattern you love. You can make it work if it has those elements.”

Another room-binding detail: New cane dining chairs recall the antique piece nearby.

A transparent bar cart picks up the room’s recurring use of clear glass and acrylic accents—blink and you’ll miss the chic but discreet fireplace screen, table lamps, and coffee table.

Visible from the living area, a bold piece of art brings the color story into the kitchen. The work's strong lines inspired the choice of pendant, which in turn informed the table base. These brass accents warm the white cabinets and walls without bringing a new color into the sunny corner.

WELTED SEAT CUSHIONS REVERSE THE COLORS OF THE LIVING ROOM SOFA.



SMALL SPACES WITH Style

When every inch counts, try Barrie Benson's strategies.

Pick a sofa large enough that it can be used for an overnight guest. Keep the back low and the arms tight to play down its size.

Choose a dining table with a leaf or two so you can host eight for dinner. Store them under a bed or in a closet.

WALL
QUIET
MOMENTS
1563
BENJAMIN
MOORE

DELICATE IN APPEARANCE, THE ROMAN SHADES ARE LINED WITH HARDWORKING BLACKOUT FABRIC.



PHOTO: (HEADSHOT) WILLY SOMA

The minty sage from the kitchen bench flows into the master where it strikes a restful note behind a vibrant magenta headboard. Spicy mustard details bridge the complementary red-green base. ■