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COLOR!

A 1950s ranch gets a modern makeover thanks to a few gallons of paint and a palette drawn from its owner's vibrant personality

When she bought a 1950s ranch in June 2009, Jenn Lamarre knew that it needed some updates to make it livable for herself and her two young daughters, ages ten and twelve. She was thinking of a more open kitchen and maybe some upgraded appliances. But her decorator and good friend Barrie Benson saw a more dire issue, and pronounced the solution in a single word: color.

"I called the place a 'granny ranch,'" says Benson. "It felt too old for her and her two girls."

"I'm not a neutral person," agrees Lamarre. "I find it liberating to be surrounded by color. And the house didn't lend itself to muted tones."

Both women got what they wanted. Architect Matt Benson (Barrie's husband) of Meyer Greeson Paullin Benson and Salins Group Construction knocked down a wall that sectioned off the breakfast room, making a more open central gathering space out of the kitchen. But the most significant changes started with a few dozen cans of paint.

"She might love color even more than I do," says Benson. "I don't think we missed a shade in the spectrum." Most rooms have a hint of Lamarre's favorite peacock-blue-and-bright-green combo, with pops of orange for vivid contrast. The kitchen features accents of lemon yellow, inspired by a set of china in the same shade that Lamarre inherited from her mother.

The result is an energetic, modern space where bright shades peacefully coexist. And more importantly for Lamarre, "a fun, happy house for me and my girls."

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE
Lamarre calls her sun porch "the Florida room," and in both function and form it's a nod to her native Naples, Florida. Because the walls are painted white up to the chair rail molding, Benson says, they felt the walls above could handle the deep, dark blue they chose to offset bright chartreuse upholstery. New York artist Natasha Law painted the oil painting above the fireplace.

by jill waldbieser // photographs by chris edwards





RAINBOW ROOM
The new, open kitchen is where everyone hangs out now, says Lamarre. White-painted cabinets keep the mood airy and bright, and provide a backdrop for bright pops of lemon, teal, and coral, including a formerly white chandelier that was treated to some high-gloss spray paint. "There do have to be areas that rest your brain when there's so much color around," Benson says of the neutral cabinetry.



NOT NEUTRAL
Clockwise from top left: A graphic malachite-green chair is striking against pale blush walls that are "almost like a neutral" in the dining-room-cum-home-office. The color scheme was informed by Lamarre's travels. "She wasn't afraid of these Guatemalan bright pinks and greens," says Benson. "That was really fun." Wood paneling gives the den a more classic feel, while a thick Moroccan rug adds an element of coziness. Lamarre loves pattern as much as color, as evidenced by the zebra chair in the family room; "Instead of a formal living room, we thought it'd be neat to have a fifties parlor sectional," says Benson. "That started making the house feel very different."



TANGERINE SCENE
This seventies-style metallic bird-patterned wallpaper in the foyer was the starting point for the home's face-lift. "It changed the mood of the house because it was so different," says Benson.



SOUTHERN EXPOSURE
A white cowhide rug and acrylic table are modern touches that work with the vibrant hues of the Florida room. Color is not as scary as you think, says Lamarre. "The worst thing that happens is, if you don't love it, you change it," she says.

+ ONLINE: Find out what paint colors Benson chose for this home.