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# House Beautiful

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# STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

WHEN A SELF-DESCRIBED MAXIMALIST DECORATOR MEETS A BRAND-NEW FLORIDA HOUSE, BIRDS AND BLUE-AND-WHITE CHINA RUN RIOT—FOR BIG-TIME IMPACT.

SUMMER LIVING



In the great room of a house north of Naples, Florida, designer Summer Thornton placed heron prints from Art.com over Anthropologie's Indigo Washed dresser. **OPPOSITE:** "I like making a statement in an entry," says Thornton, who commissioned custom panels by Allison Cosmos and massed blue-and-white porcelain from Charlotte & Ivy and Wisteria on an 1880s console.

Interior Design **SUMMER THORNTON** Text **LISA CREGAN** Photography **LUKE WHITE** Producer **DORETTA SPERDUTO**

All the colors in the house flow from the great room, where walls painted in Benjamin Moore's Alabaster, a creamy sofa from Restoration Hardware, and Stark's Bovina jute rug calm a bright palette. Jayson Home's Milo teak coffee table keeps the vintage stools, covered in Jacques Bouvet et Cie's Samburu silk, from making the room feel too formal.



When winter winds howl through their Illinois town, Dan and Karen Heller think of Summer—Chicago designer Summer Thornton, that is. The smashing good looks of their getaway north of Naples, Florida, as bright and breezy as a perfect July day, are thanks entirely to Thornton living up to her name.

The couple purposely chose a house in a community that offers golf, tennis, and all manner of water sports just steps from their front door. Their hope was to lure their two married sons, three young grandchildren, brothers of daughters-in-law, Dan's 80-something parents, assorted friends—in short, everyone they love—to come enjoy it with them. The place needed to be a happy fit for multiple generations.

“Is it possible to be casual but also elegant?” was the question Karen posed at the start. That pretty much describes Thornton's style to a T, so she dove right in with her typical brio. “I do equate happiness with color,” she confesses, but says her complex palettes always start with a surprisingly simple recipe: “First I ask myself, What is the main white? Should it be a cool white? Or a cloudy white?” Here, she chose paint in an alabaster shade to warm the great room, which has 20-foot ceilings, then matched the fabrics to that creamy color. “Next, I ask myself, What will be our main contrast color? Here it's indigo, but in another house, it might be raisin or even black,” she says. “Strong contrast creates bold crispness. I don't like muddiness. The object is to keep things cheery!”

To underscore the blue-and-white theme, Thornton helped hunt down hundreds of pieces of Chinese export-style porcelain that she and Karen then filled with flowers, layered on consoles, and even enlisted as end tables. Coral arrived by the crateful, too, and was scattered extravagantly. “A house has more impact if you go all the way with accessories,” Thornton says. Besides, the collections make the place feel settled despite having been built just two years ago.

Most striking, though, is the runaway riot of birds. Recognizing Karen's passion for the long-legged waders in

the nature preserve outside her windows, Thornton commissioned custom panels featuring vibrant portraits of herons, egrets, and warblers to greet visitors at the entry. Birds also flutter along the great room walls and show up on the frame of the powder room's vintage mirror. “What can I say? I'm a maximalist!” Thornton says with a laugh.

Some gravitas was needed to ground all the saucy fun, so Thornton looked to British Colonial style, à la the Bahamas, for inspiration. That led to the dark wood stools in the great room, the 19th-century console in the entry, a large walnut dining table, and an iron four-poster (complete with sheer curtains to catch the breeze) for one of the guest rooms.

“I like to get people all warm and comfortable with traditional furniture and then throw in something like vibrant orange to shake things up,” Thornton says. Apricots, peaches, corals, tangerines, and papaya add zing to every room. “The table skirt in the great room has a salmony tone, but the sofa pillows are a little duskier—more brown—to reference the wood coffee table,” she explains. In the bedrooms, the designer turned to warmer oranges for coziness. “It creates so much interest to use lots of different shades of an animated color,” Thornton says. “As long as you keep to the base colors you picked at the beginning, you can go for it!”

These days the house bustles, just as the owners hoped. The dining table is devoted to blood-and-guts pinochle with the great-grandparents and board games with the kids. The great room wall pushes aside so the lanai becomes one with the interior rooms, and house-guests wander in and out, sandy children in tow. Thornton approves. “I don't like ‘no-go’ zones,” she says. “That doesn't mean I shy away from fine textiles for families. I just treat everything with stain-resistant spray and make sure cushion covers zip off for cleaning.”

The Hellers, of course, are glad their Florida home is welcoming to all. “I'd describe Summer as daring and myself as safe,” Karen says. “She was exactly what I needed.”

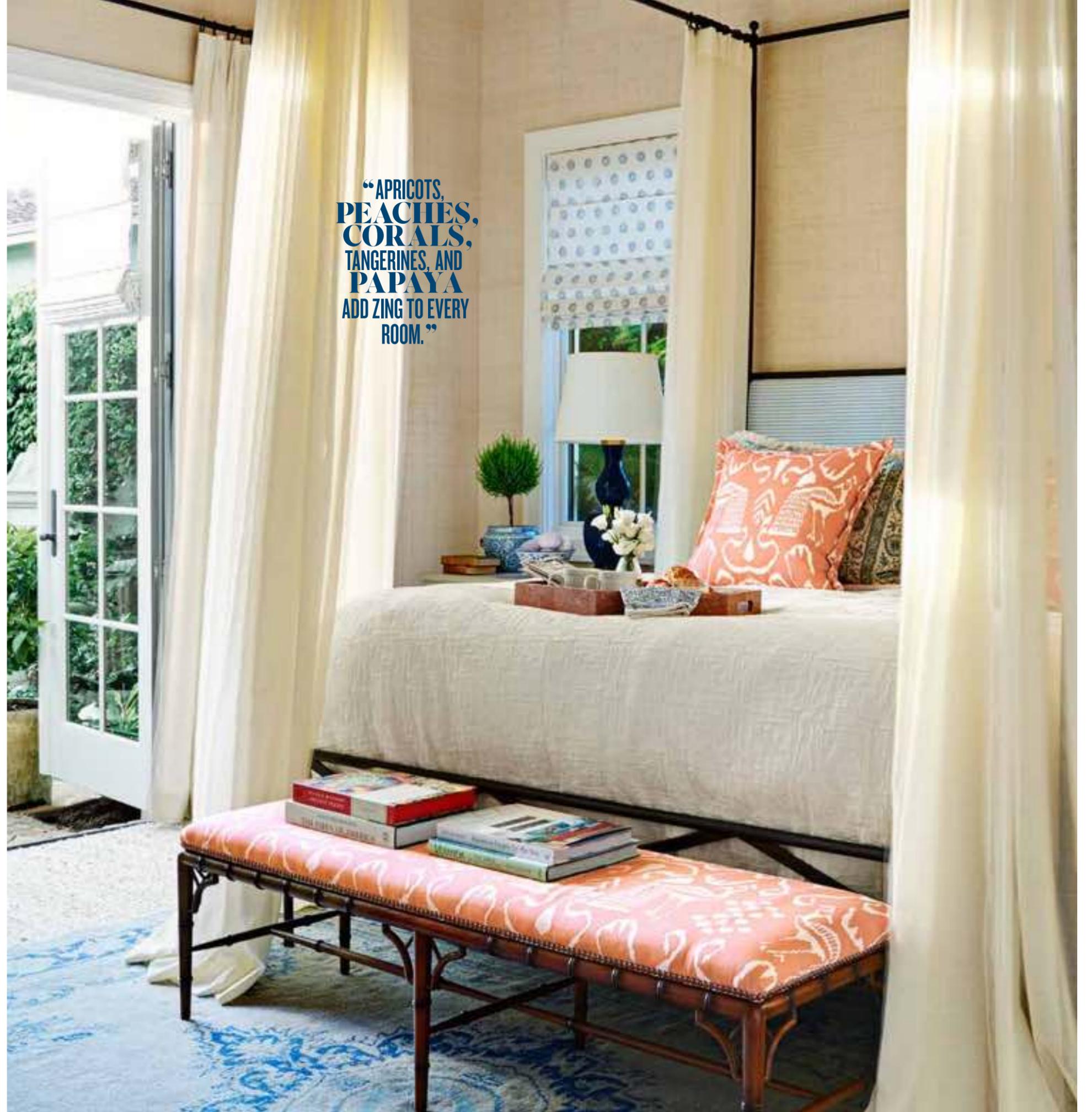
**RIGHT:** “The dining area in the great room was tricky because it's so open,” says Thornton, who used Henredon's Veneto dining table as the anchor, hanging Circa Lighting's Gramercy chandelier over it. The slope of the arms of wicker Mallory dining chairs from Made Goods “gives them a certain elegance that separates them from outdoor furniture,” the designer says, and the vintage Indian dhurrie from Madeline Weinrib “brings age and history into the space.”





**ABOVE:** Java Grande wallpaper from China Seas is a bold backdrop for the powder room. The mirror is vintage. Gramercy Glass washstand, Restoration Hardware. **OPPOSITE:** Calais tiles from Granada Tile enliven the lanai and carry the home's profusion of blue and white outdoors. Wicker furniture from Kingsley-Bate with cushions in Perennials' Rough 'n Rowdy fabric surrounds the Bornova coffee table from Ballard Designs.

**RIGHT:** Chicago designer Summer Thornton in the front courtyard. **BELOW:** A Werstler dresser from Worlds Away tucks into a guest room niche beneath a grid of framed sea urchins found on One Kings Lane. **FAR RIGHT:** The fragrance of gardenias drifts in through the guest room door, enhancing the romance of the Rawlins bed from S&L Designs, draped with sheer panels in Calvin Fabrics' Clarity. Orange migrates in from the great room via Williams-Sonoma Home's Chippendale bench, which is covered in China Seas' Bali II. Primitive Weave wallpaper, Kneedler Fauchère. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES



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