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GOLD LIST 2021



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JAN/FEB 2021 | DISPLAY UNTIL 03/15/21

New Classics

FROM LADYBUG WALLPAPER TO SUBTLY SUBVERSIVE ART, FOUR DESIGNERS REFLECT ON STYLE.

PRODUCED BY BRITTANY CHEVALIER MCINTYRE



Courtney McLeod in the living room of her Manhattan apartment.

Courtney McLeod Girl Power

Reflecting on my personal aesthetic begins with memories of my mom's colorful outfits and red lipstick. I grew up in a world of color and pattern—French, African and Far East Asian influences. At home, there were art and sculptures, such as the pair of elegant felines that live in my living room today. There were textiles, like the chinoiserie print with golden threads on the formal living room sofa. I remember the effortless mix—not expensive or formal, but unique and just right. Growing up in New Orleans, you learn being different can be a badge of honor.

I am unabashedly a girly-girl. My mom used to dress me in ruffles, pinafores, lace socks and shiny patent leather shoes. With my Coke-bottle glasses, you can imagine it was quite a sight. After my time in college known as the “sweatpants era” and a start in finance I classify as the “how boring can this suit be” period, I began a return to my true innate spirit. Fashion and decor were the ways to express my creativity within the confines of my gray pinstripe-suit world. Perhaps the white Phillip Lim dress with the 3D flowers, high-heel patent leather Mary Janes and black tights weren't exactly office attire, but I didn't let that stop me from strutting down the halls and turning a few heads.

My passion for the decorative arts and design shone through my home decor during that formative time. I had eight apartments in 15 years just to redecorate. Crazy, but so much fun! I played—a Hershey's chocolate dining room in my Midtown place, peacock blue-painted walls and ceiling in the Uptown bedroom, and even the perfect white in my high-rise bachelorette pad. I spent years experimenting on myself—a big reason why I am unafraid to be bold in my work today.

PHOTO: LESLEY UNRUH.

Billy Ceglia in the sitting room of his client's home in Armonk, New York.



Billy Ceglia

Ever Clever

True inherent style is an unerring and unapologetic point of view that can be translated into every aspect of an individual's life. It informs everything the possessor does and has—from the way they answer the phone, welcome you into their home, dress, and of course, decorate their living spaces. In my own homes, I try to create a sense of ease and comfort to welcome guests—adopting small details like leaving the door unlocked and arranging empty hangers in the coat closet for their garments. I have a “help yourself” attitude when it comes to refreshments or anything in my home. If you need it, it's yours for the taking.

Since I adhere to such a tight design lexicon of simple materials and shapes, and a relatively limited color palette, it has jokingly been said that my favorite color is “plain”—and I happily own that. While I appreciate the ornate and complex, my personal preference always circles back to a level of simplicity with a touch of the unexpected or tongue-in-cheek. It could be a few books with funny titles, such as Avery Monsen's *All My Friends Are Dead* (a particular favorite), or a subtly subversive piece of art in an otherwise sober room.

These same details are also a part of my wardrobe. What appears to be a classic menswear pattern could be made up of thousands of cartoon mice, or the lining of a jacket could be painted with illustrations from Albert Lamorisse's *The Red Balloon*, with a secret message under the collar to “follow me.” Similar to my streamlined fashion choices, my interiors are filled with simple and practical fabrics, tailored furniture and timeless details that reflect an enduring point of view. This leaves room for my personality, which is neither “plain” nor uncomplicated!



Noz Nozawa with her French bulldog, Vivienne, in her San Francisco apartment.

Noz Nozawa

Sky's The Limit

It never occurred to me that my box of a city condo would become a homey shrine to my collection of eccentric things. A decade ago, I was in my early 20s, flailing in the aftermath of the recession and searching for a place to buy when my mom sold my childhood home. The panging feeling of my foundation being uprooted while simultaneously my family having no home of our own stuck with me. I think it's why, despite my dreams of moving into an iconic San Francisco Victorian, I remain in my developer-built flat. As a result, a big part of how my style manifests is working within limitations.

I like testing and pushing boundaries to see how many colors and patterns a room can handle before it feels uncomfortable. When I allowed myself to use my home as a canvas for experimentation, a new part of my creative brain unlocked. I found a 19th-century French sideboard to use as a bar and installed modern built-ins around it marrying my home's modern lines with my love of antiquity. With decorative artist Caroline Lizarraga, I created a "conspicuous camouflage" mural on the walls with gilded brush lines. Then I had the idea for cartoonish tapestry-inspired blobby drapes and collaborated with artist Isa Beniston to bring funny dragons and lions to life in my windows.

A defining moment early in my career was when I read that one of the ottoman seats in a room designed by Ken Fulk on a magazine cover was sourced from Costco. I thought, "His projects have budgets I can barely imagine, but he chose to leave that piece in!" It reaffirmed my principles: Keep what you love, work with things that don't need replacement, put nothing on a pedestal and check your humility.

Jenny Brown in the dining room of her client's home in Lincoln Park, Chicago.



Jenny Brown

Class and Confidence

I'll never forget the excitement when a bag of hand-me-downs from Wendy, a family friend, would appear on our kitchen table. On one occasion, the bag contained a powder pink tracksuit, the kind popular in the '80s, and a far departure from the smocked Laura Ashley or applied Florence Eiseman dresses I normally donned for a special event. Ready for my best friend's birthday party, I descended our staircase channeling my inner Wendy in the ensemble—my mousy brown hair newly coiffed with bangs and big glasses. Cloaked in the confidence of looking and feeling great, in my mind, I had arrived.

Growing up in Lake Forest, Illinois, where architect David Adler was the patron saint and understated elegance reigned supreme, I was raised to appreciate the relaxed formality of my parents, my grandmother and their friends. While their homes were beautifully decorated, if you looked hard enough you would find an element of humor and whimsy. From miniature model rooms tucked within a library bookshelf and ladybug wallpaper adorning a formal powder room to miles of chintz covering windows and chairs, these houses reflected the confident ease of lives well lived and taught me to appreciate patina over polish.

Real style does not seek the approval of others. It is the creative expression of those who possess it and have the confidence and joie de vivre to pull it off. Looking at photos from that birthday party where I'm wearing the powder pink tracksuit, I confess, I now prefer the pretty dresses my friends wore, though I am grateful for the encouragement from my parents to explore my own tastes. It is more than OK to stand out in a crowd.

PHOTO: CYNTHIA LYNN