

TEXT JENNIFER HUGHES | PHOTOGRAPHY STACEY BRANDFORD

colour me *bright*

Designer, home-owner, mother and blogger Meredith Heron manages to do it all in a way that's just as subtle as it is vibrant. In 15 questions, she reveals how she applied this juxtaposition to her Victorian rowhouse.


To prevent the narrow living room's numerous patterns from fighting for attention, homeowner and designer Meredith Heron used soothing neutrals as a backdrop. The sofa, stools and armchairs were all eBay finds that Meredith had reupholstered.

DESIGN, Meredith Heron Design, meredithheron.com;
Edgecomb Gray HC-173 **WALL PAINT**, Benjamin Moore; Plexiglas **TABLES**, Absolutely; **TABLE LAMPS**, Decorum Decorative Finds; **RUG**, Weavers Art.

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Mancini **DRAPERY FABRIC** in Indigo, Maxwell Fabrics.





Meredith with her adorable two-year-old son, Luke. The neutral skirt on the TV console ("which, by the way, is a godsend with a toddler; it hides everything from sight") blends into the wall – a trick Meredith used to make the narrow living room feel larger.

Ask designer Meredith Heron what her favourite colour is and she'll break out in a sweat. "It's a designer's version of *Sophie's Choice*," she says. "I'm pretty fickle, and my favourite combinations change like the wind."

Despite this, her Victorian rowhouse in Toronto's charming Cabbagetown neighbourhood, which she shares with husband Asa Weinstein and their two-year-old son, Luke, is a stylish study in cohesive use of colour, pattern and texture. Greys and indigos mix with pomegranate in the living room, navy and pink create a sophisticated mix in the master bedroom, and white and coral grounded with black in the dressing room make for a vibrant aesthetic.

Pinning down Meredith's own decorating style is equally challenging, but "fearless" would definitely fit. Layers of pattern lend megawatt personality to her rooms, but a backdrop of muted neutrals keeps the look grounded and prevents a chaotic effect. This is especially important in a small space, which, at just under 1,000 square feet, is a consideration here. "Scale and proportion are key," with both pattern mixing and furniture size, says Meredith.

It's all a balancing act, and it seems that she's got it all figured out – until the winds of change blow again.



ABOVE The dining area is open to the kitchen, so it strikes a careful balance between formal and family-friendly. Grey faux ostrich leather on the chair seats can be easily wiped clean; the chair fronts and backs are upholstered in different patterns in the same grey palette. “I knew I wanted to go with grey, so I started the fabric choices off in the dining room before choosing similar-toned

fabrics for the living room,” says Meredith.

Seed Pearl 2314 **WALL PAINT**, Pratt & Lambert; Kelly Wearstler Imperial Trellis **CHAIR FABRIC** (on front of chairs), Schumacher; grey silk **CHAIR FABRIC** (on back of chairs), David Hicks; grey faux ostrich leather **CHAIR FABRIC** (on seats), Maxwell Fabrics.

LEFT A few hits of bright blue provide just the right amount of colour in the almost all-white kitchen.

What’s your favourite colour combination?

I am drawn to mutable colours because they work so nicely with others and morph and change depending on the light or what you pair them with. I am specifically drawn to indigo. In my own house, you can see I’ve paired it with both pomegranate and citrine.

What was your approach to designing your own home?

I’m my own worst client. I like too many things. I’m terrible at making decisions when it comes to my own house. I often resort to treating my husband like a client, but he’s just as bad. He’s hesitant when I’m leaning toward bold and bold when I’m hesitating and wanting safe. Our house really did come together in a curated way. Pieces were bought on eBay and then stored until more pieces of the puzzle came together.

What was your original vision, and how did you go about executing it?

We live in a classic Victorian, so originally we wanted to hearken back to that. Of course, narrow Victorians have space limitations as well, so finding the right sofa, for example, was key to the overall design of our nine-foot-wide living room. We started with the Federal-style camelback sofa, opting to update it by having it sprayed and reupholstered. And then we paired the sofa with two vintage Vladimir Kagan slipper chairs that also needed to be reupholstered.

What’s your go-to neutral?

I’ve done greys for years. I used to stalk Martha Stewart, looking at her use of greys and greiges. I know it’s trendy right now, but I will always pick a grey as a neutral wall colour over a beige or tan. Having said that, I’m using navy as my preferred neutral at the moment.

How would you describe your own style?

I like bold gestures. I used to say that I loved a layered, eclectic look, but that has become such a clichéd design phrase that I shy away from it now. I am drawn to classic architecture, embellished interiors with unexpected colour combinations, and layers of pattern and texture. I like my interiors complex but grounded in the simple. How’s that for a design paradox?

If you could only live with one colour, what would it be?

Indigo – it's the perfect neutral to me. It can be a dark inky charcoal, it can be a purple, it can be a navy. There isn't a colour it doesn't play nicely with.

What's your trick for keeping such a deep palette looking fresh and light?

It's all about balance and proportion – they can make any bold palette work. In our living room, I've kept the walls light because we only have one window that lets in light. Repeating aspects of the living room's palette in other areas of the house has established a sense of flow, which also makes the house feel bigger and brighter.

What's your advice for living with colour?

The key to living with colour is to ground it with a neutral. I often paint walls neutral, keep large pieces of upholstery neutral and then add in colour with accents, drapery and rugs. Colour in fabrics is much easier to live with than in paint. The only exception is in a transitional space, such as a hallway or powder room, where I don't have to look at it all the time.

What was easy when pulling the space together, and what was challenging? Did you try anything you thought would work but didn't?

The living room was a no-brainer once I found the drapery fabric and the floral we used on the sofa toss cushions. It only took three years to get to that point! I think the kitchen was the easiest part of the house to design. Our entire kitchen renovation lasted only two weeks, from the time we ripped it out until it was finished. Having said that, it was the longest two weeks of my life.

There's a lot of pattern in the living room.

How do you mix so many patterns in one room without making it look too busy?

Keeping big pieces like the sofa and the walls neutral is the key to grounding everything. I chose patterns that had light backgrounds that related to the neutrals in the room. If the drapery had been a dark background with light embroidery, it would have closed in the room. The sofa blends into the wall, which keeps it from being defined and making the room seem narrower than it already is. Adding colour and pattern in the toss cushions offers the little bit of cheek I love to include in a space.

In the dining area, the chairs have no less than three patterns on them (seats, fronts and backs). That's a pretty big commitment.

Commitment? It's the complete opposite – it's fabric polygamy! Can't decide on just one? Go for three! This is probably one of my signature design tricks. I love to mix in as many fabrics as possible in a dining room. You see the chairs

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St. Boniface P2150-02
WALL PAINT,
Para Paints.





from so many different vantage points, so I love the interest this creates. My big trick is to always make the seat a washable, well-wearing fabric. I am a klutz and spill red wine a lot – just ask my husband.

Your kitchen seems pretty neutral compared to the rest of the house.

We opted for a warm white kitchen because there is literally zero natural light in the room. My husband used to be a caterer. The kitchen is really his domain, so I approached him very much like a client when we were working on the design and layout. It's why we have so many open cabinets and shelves in the space. He used to always leave upper cabinet doors open for easy access. Now I don't bang my head on them!

The dressing room is much more feminine than the other rooms. Why did you decide to let your girlie side show in here?

My husband has referred to me as a girlie girl when it comes to dressing up. I suppose I indulged this side of me in the dressing room. My clothes, accessories and bags were overtaking the rest of our home and this room wasn't really getting much use, so I took it over in a single swoop. I think I may have "over-girlified" it to keep everyone out! My son calls it "Momma's Room."

The principal bedroom has a wonderful moody ambience thanks to the dark paint on the walls. Why did you decide to go so dark?

I really prefer a dark room to sleep in. To keep it from feeling too dark and heavy, I opted to go light on the bed, which ties in with the lighter neutral silk drapery and the carpet in the room.

Is there a common mistake you see people make in their homes when it comes to colour?

So many people say that if you want to redecorate or experiment with colour, paint the walls first. I actually disagree with this. So much is involved with selecting a paint colour – it's the last choice I make for a space because all of the other elements should be in place. Don't design your room around a \$40 can of paint. The paint choice should complement or enhance everything else that's going on in a room.

FOR SOURCES, SEE OUR WORKBOOK

LEFT The dark walls in the master bedroom are offset by the room's bright, south-facing window and light-coloured bedding and carpet. The bold zebra-print bench brings a graphic punch to the space.

CHANDELIER, Green's Antiques; **BED FRAME, DRAPERY, MIRROR** (over bed), **CUSHIONS**, zebra-print **BENCH**, Meredith Heron Design.

ABOVE LEFT A spare room was put to good use by turning it into a chic, girlie dressing room for Meredith.

OTTOMAN, HomeSense.

ABOVE RIGHT Adding framed artwork with large white mats to the decor balances the bedroom's dark walls.

ARTWORK, Leigh Viner.

BELOW Meredith indulged her feminine side in the dressing room, opting for a palette of pink, coral and gold pulled directly from the antique Aubusson rug. Black curtains prevent the room from becoming too precious.

Soft White 2170-70 **WALL PAINT**, Coral Spice 2170-40 **VANITY PAINT**, Benjamin Moore; Edland **VANITY** (painted), IKEA.

