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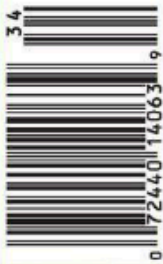
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The sprawling flowered rug set the scheme for Beth and Keith Keim's TV room, *opposite*, pulling in peacock blue and zesty orange from elsewhere in the house. Keith designed most of the art displayed, and the planked ceiling is his handiwork, too. The narrow wooden shelf under the art is a slim slice of a log the Keims hung with L brackets—easy peasy!

# wake-up call

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A LITTLE TIME ON YOUR HANDS—PLUS A SHRUNKEN WALLET AND A WELLSPRING OF CREATIVITY—TO SQUEEZE SOME MOJO OUT OF A DRAB DESIGN SITUATION.

WRITER SARAH WOLF  
PHOTOGRAPHER BRIE WILLIAMS  
FIELD EDITOR ANDREA CAUGHEY

The story begins five years ago, when the economy was bad and Beth Keim's interior design clients were reluctant to completely revamp their homes. Instead, they were tweaking the interiors, working within tight budgets, and reusing stuff they already had—a tricky balancing act for a designer.

But such restrictions can also blow the doors off what's been tried—and what's gotten tired. "It's harder to repurpose than it is to replace," Beth says, "but I learned a lot." She even turned her attention—now finely tuned to laying out more creativity than cash—to her own Charlotte bungalow, which had been awash in taupe walls and neutral furnishings.

This is when the story gets good.

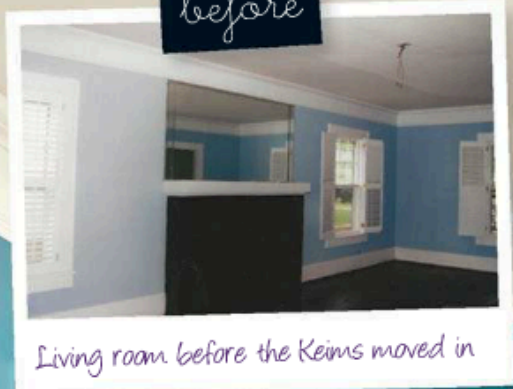
In a whirlwind, Beth sold her living room furniture to a client—"she got a good deal, I got a good deal, and everybody was happy," she says—and blew the money on a fabulous mirrored armoire and tailored sofa for her new living room. And then she invited in blue: vibrant, showy, peacock blue.

"What is really funny is that a designer never picks a paint color first," she says. "But I picked that blue. And then I stood back and went, 'How am I going to tie the rest of these rooms together?'"

The answer, it turns out, was by coaxing that blue into pretty much every other space. It pops up on the window cornices, a beaded chandelier, and lampshades in the dining room. The blue sneaked onto a fur pillow in Beth's home office. It's dabbed onto the bedding, a chaise longue, and a vase in the master bedroom. It sprouts out of a giant flowered rug in the TV room and swaddles a high-back chair in the kitchen. Pretty-as-a-peacock blue makes special appearances in almost every room, merrily mingling with neutrals and brights alike.

"That blue seems to go with anything—oranges and pinks and yellows and greens," Beth says.

before



Living room before the Keims moved in



A super pricey art piece?  
Nope. Framed wallpaper panels!



**The catalyst for redecorating:**

the living room, *this photo*, with its straight-sided sofa and dazzling blue walls. A motley crew of treasures with various origins—a flea market, a client's discard pile, Keith's craftsmanship—shows just how eclectic and fun the Keims' taste runs. Through the French doors, one of Keith's paintings sets the color scheme in Beth's office.





Rendezvous Bay, 726  
Benjamin Moore;  
benjaminmoore.com

"If you work the same hue through an entire house, you can use any color you want with it, as long as it's all the same tone, which is saturated and clear in this case," Beth says. "There are no pastels—no muted stuff in this house."

But every piece has presence.

"I just like collecting a lot of stuff," Beth says with a shrug. "And some of these weird pieces"—dog statues by the fireplace and an inflatable Pilates ball covered in teddy bear fur (Beth is sitting on it in the photo on [page 42](#)), to name a couple—"don't have a story, but they look like they do," she says. "I tell people to get the bones of the decorating scheme going: Pick a color palette and figure out the major pieces of furniture and rugs. And then half the fun is filtering in all the stuff you come across."

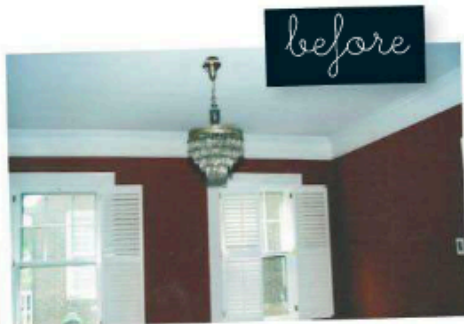
## cheap tricks

Why spend a fortune when a pittance will do? Interior designer Beth Keim let us in on some of her seriously swanky—and cheap—secrets.

- 1 YOU MIGHT THINK** a giant framed art piece sprawls on my living room wall. But it's actually a swath of fancy wallpaper glued to the wall and rimmed with molding that's been mitered and painted to look like a frame.
- 2 TRIM FOOLERY** in the living and dining rooms: See the pricey, 8-inch-deep crown molding? That ain't molding—and it ain't expensive. I put regular, little-bitty molding at the ceiling's edge, scooted down however many inches and put picture rail molding on the wall, and united it all with paint.
- 3 ARRANGING THE MASTER BEDROOM** was tough for me because of an off-center window on one wall. A hotel stay sparked the idea to cover the window wall with curtains so the bed could go against it.

The towering mirrored armoire, opposite, was one of two new additions to the now-lively living room. It cozies up next to a saucy chair, a flea market find that was one of an “immensely ugly” pair, Beth says. She had a vision, though: “I yanked down the curtains in the dining room and re-covered the chairs with that fabric,” she says. She sold the other chair to a client, “trying to be thrifty back then when the economy was so bad.”

Rather than going with draperies, Beth mounted one of Keith’s paintings, right, as a window covering in her office. It’s just as fab-looking from the outside, as the reverse side is also painted.



This stuffy room needed to lighten up!

Beth kept the taupe wallpaper, this photo, from her former neutral scheme in the dining room—who could resist that loose floral pattern?—but brought in jolts of that bubbly blue to link the space to the nearby living room.





Cumulus Cloud, 1959  
Benjamin Moore;  
benjaminmoore.com

The fabric on the languid chaise longue, above, contributed accent colors of sour yellow and peacock blue, which surface on the nearby bed and accessories.

“It all began when I decided to add color to the house. I had a very tone-on-tone look—which I loved—but I decided I wanted color and comfort.”  
—homeowner and interior designer  
Beth Keim

## kernels of wisdom

Designer Beth Keim has so many great ideas for interiors that we can't resist sharing some more. Here are our faves.

**PILE ON THE RUGS.** “Your floor is your fifth wall, in my opinion, so layering is important,” Beth says. In the master bedroom, a blue striped rug cozies up the hardwood floors, and a sheepskin is tossed atop that. “You can layer rugs all day long.”

**STAY NEUTRAL.** Though the living room is an exception to this general rule, it's worth noting that most of the house is cloaked in neutral paint. “That blue room has the strongest color in the house,” Beth says, “but the TV room has cream walls, and both the den and master bedroom have gray. With neutral walls, other colors just pop.”

**GO SIDEWAYS.** “Running stripes horizontally is more modern than running them vertically,” she says.

**REACH HIGH.** The window cornices in the dining and living rooms graze the ceiling and are notched around the crown molding. “I do that so the room looks as tall as possible,” Beth says. She does that with window treatments, too—they brush both the ceiling and the floor.

**DIAL IT BACK.** It's important to note that amid the zany patterns and dazzling hues in the Keim house, there's balance. “I draw it back in with some symmetry in the bedrooms, even though my house is kind of a hodgepodge,” Beth says. “I like the symmetry of matching lamps and matching tables; to me, it's calming.”

**PLAY THE DRUM.** Beth's a big fan of drum lampshades—as opposed to the more traditional bell style—because they direct more light upward.

**“FRESH” FLOWERS.** Flower arrangements in the Keim household aren't real and they aren't silk—get this: They're rubber. Sturdier than fabric and longer-lasting than cut flowers, Beth employs them at home (on the living room mantel and the dining room corbel) and in her clients' houses—and sells them at her store.





**“I love the look** of the big, fluffy hotel duvet, but it doesn’t look like that for long,” Beth says. She commissioned a custom bedspread for the master bedroom, *left*, that’s much more tailored and tame.

**Daughter Lucy, age 14,** “loves, loves, loves that acid green,” Beth says. Beth wasn’t keen on painting the walls green, so she swathed them in a wallpaper forest of birch trees, *below*, and “funked it up with the green in all the accessories,” she says.

**Resources on page 116**

