

# FEEL THE HEAT

Bold, spicy colors mean it's always summer in this penthouse apartment

**A**s the evenings get darker and we turn our lights – and our heating – on earlier, one Hell's Kitchen couple will still be basking in a slice of exotic summer sunshine.

Their modern, three-bed apartment started life as a blank canvas – pure white. It was clean and bright, sure, but where was the personality?

Enter Bhavin Taylor, a London-based interior designer who just happened to be in the right place at the right time. “While traveling in the States I was approached to take on this project, which was an opportunity I wasn't going to turn down,” he says.

The sprawling penthouse space is spread over three floors. The lower floor has two bedrooms, both with en-suites; the main floor has an open-plan living space, a kitchen, and a third bedroom and bathroom, while the top floor is a large roof terrace overlooking the city. Jealous much?

“The brief was quite open,” says Bhavin, “as the clients were looking for the design direction from me. They did initially ask that the design was something simple and modern that would suit the style of the building. They showed me some images from magazines that they liked that were quite plain and muted, mainly in a cream/beige colour scheme with very subtle accents of colour. They also wanted to take advantage of the high ceilings and quirky shapes that the sloped ceilings made.

“As you can see, I went in the total opposite direction. I believe your home should reflect who you are and, as the clients were young and vibrant, it was important that I created them a home that reflected their personalities – which is far from beige. It was also important for the apartment to fit into its surrounding area so I had to bring in the vibrancy of Hell's Kitchen too.”

The clients – a young couple in their mid to late 20s, one working in finance,



Opposite page: An all-over pattern wall covering in the living room. Above: More bold wall choices in the bedroom. Right: Cushions add a blast of color and warmth.



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# REAL ESTATE

the other in marketing – took a little persuading to give up on their beige vision, admits Bhavin. “There was a lot of back and forth conversation to convince them to trust me, which luckily got easier when the decor started to be installed and they could see how it was all coming together.”

“The living room design was based around the custom rug which I created using different designs from Flor. And as I was able to show them how it would potentially look in the supplier’s Soho showroom, I think was the turning point that gave them the confidence to say yes to the bold choices.”

The result feels warm and exotic, with spice market colors like chilli reds, saffron oranges, turmeric yellows. “That’s definitely a signature style of mine,” says Bhavin. “My personality is quite bright and cheerful so I’m certain this influences my design style too.”

“I have a keen passion for color and pattern, and find that using plainer walls creates the perfect backdrop. I do also like to make bold statements, which is evident in this apartment in the orange wall colour in the living room and the all-over statement wallpaper in the master bedroom.”

“I’d love to be able to take this even further,” he adds, “and really layer pattern on pattern without the white walls. However, I’m yet to find a client who is bold enough for this design style, but I’m sure they’ll come along one day...”

The Asian/ethnic influence wasn’t a deliberate one. “However, I believe my passion for strong colours and patterns comes from my Indian background, which must play subconsciously in my design choices. Being brought up surrounded by colorful clothing, cultural festivals, big Indian weddings, etc have definitely been an influence for me.”

While some of furniture looks vintage, it is all, in fact, brand new – “but it’s great that it doesn’t come across as all shiny and new,” says Bhavin. “The colorful armchair, along with some of the other pieces of furniture, came from Room and Board. There are also purchases from West Elm and Urban Outfitters. The vinyl artwork was created by the client, which I was keen to use as it makes the space personal to them.”

Still shy of bringing the sunshine indoors? Bhavin has these words of advice: “Be strong and go for it! Always remember that nothing is permanent



Clockwise from top left: The master bedroom; yellow towels bring color to an otherwise all-white bathroom; Bhavin at the breakfast bar. Right: That bright orange wall.

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and can be changed. If it’s your first time, start with things like accessories or a painted wall as these are inexpensive to change if you decide you don’t like them.

“Also, take it slowly – start with one color, get used to that, then slowly add another.”

“If you’re unsure what colors work together, take inspiration from nature, especially flowers. Next time you walk past a flower shop take a look at the colors and see what takes your fancy, or look at flowers that are made up of different colors and use that as a starting point.”

“Don’t be afraid to take the step as, I can guarantee, once you start you’ll look back and ask yourself, ‘What was I ever afraid of?’”

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