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PLAY GROUNDS

Forget less is more. In a groovy Nichols Canyon hideaway, big-time pattern and go-for-broke color push rooms out of the gray area and into the fun zone

BY ANDREW MYERS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JONN COOLIDGE

The qualifications would have quelled lesser monochrome modernists. Siblings, business partners and designers Josh and Ryan Brown, both ardent defenders of gray and brown rooms and furniture with lots of 90-degree angles, confronted the project with wall colors not only picked but already painted: Robins-egg blue, sea-foam green, coral. All different. All vibrant. Every one verboten by the Bauhaus.

But the Browns were intrigued by the home owner, Laurie Hasson, a fashion insider and colorful personality herself. "She wanted every single room to have a completely different feeling and declared that she was fun and wanted the house to reflect her personality," says 31-year-old younger brother Josh.

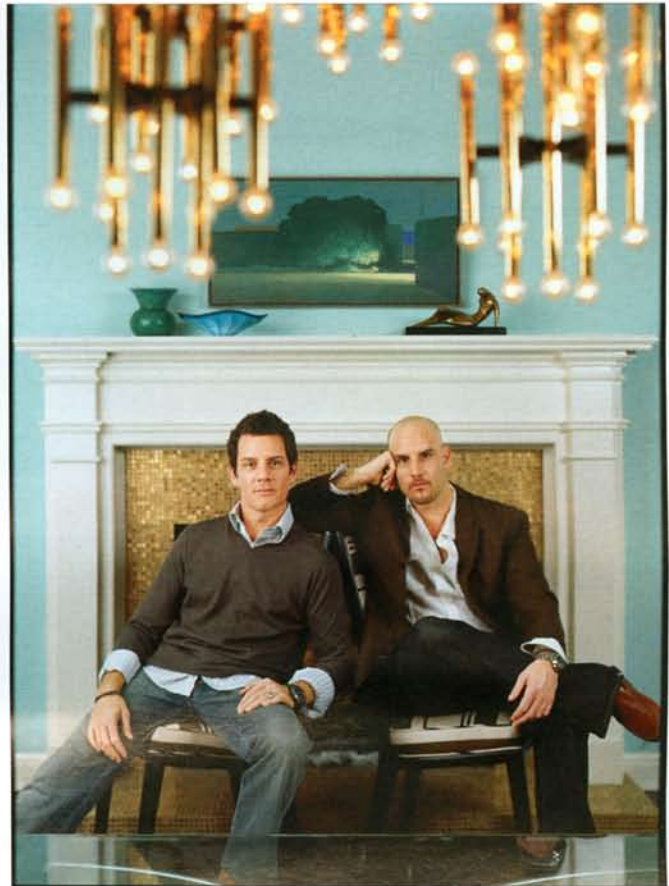
With that, the hot-pink gauntlet was thrown down. How could the Browns—Josh, with a BFA in interior design from New York's Pratt Institute; Ryan, a 33-year-old former fashion photographer—not pick it up? "We always say that with clients we're here to edit, to advocate, but it's always about them," says Josh.

The bigger question might be why Hasson and husband Peter Morris hired the Browns. "I liked their style and taste within a monochromatic palette. I had a great feeling and knew I could collaborate with them," says Hasson.

For inspiration, as well as direction, one of the Browns' first stops was Hasson's closet, a treasure trove of textiles and textures, bold tones and big patterns. Then came research-and-development field trips to Trina Turk and modern-furniture haven Twentieth. "We were learning a new vocabulary, which is always a great challenge," says Josh. The brothers, however, were quick studies, and soon a latent love of color burst through.

Take the family room: Previously a bare shell with only a crusty Cappellini sofa, it had French doors opening onto a series of terraces and a swimming pool. The goal was to bring the outside in, but in a spring-fresh way that would also provide a flexible place where the couple could watch movies and where their two daughters, Olivia and Zoe, could play. "I'd never done a green room," says Josh. Similarly, the sunroom's... CONTINUED...

In the living room, a figurative painting by L.A. artist John Sonsini looks onto a packed combo of color, pattern and vintage design. The glass-topped, cast-iron cocktail table seems to cut, propeller-like, into the lines on the 'Mata Hari' rug from Fort Street Studios. The cocoa-brown, streamlined sofas are a Vladimir Kagan design from Twentieth, and the two chrome chairs upholstered in white leather are by Sergio Mazza, circa 1962.



...CONTINUED coral walls would previously have also been beyond contemplation; nevertheless, within a week of taking on the project, Josh found the perfect area rug—in black, coffee-bean brown, rose, pink, coral and white. And while the brothers had designed plenty of gray rooms, none ever had the whimsy of the breakfast nook, where white and gray stripes rise from a burnt-orange linoleum floor and form a tent-like stepped ceiling.

Then there's the infusion of pattern upon pattern, which Ryan found to be the project's most challenging point. "Most people are afraid of using pattern," he says—especially, he adds, when that means pairing stripes with florals. But judging from the trellis-motif shades and throw pillows contrasted with the striped rug in the sunroom; the swirls and swoops on the window coverings juxtaposed with the straight lines of the dark-wood floor and abstract curves on the silk rug in the living room; and the custom-designed floor covering with a daisy and diamond repeat underneath striped floor pillows in the family room, the brothers now appear to be phobia-free when it comes to a profusion of pattern.

Still, while much in the house was new conceptually for the Browns and

literally for Hasson and Morris (only two pieces were reused from the previous "shabby chic" design scheme), the furniture itself was either vintage or of vintage design. That range focuses on modern design post-World War II, and includes the living room's Vladimir Kagan sofas, the dining room's Karl Springer sideboard and the breakfast nook's 'Tulip' chairs, as well as the family room's

'Sputnik' light fixture. It's less the objects' provenance than their sculptural form and functionality that interest Hasson, however, who notes that all of the pieces "look right" in the home's traditional shell. Together, she says, it all helps harmonize the house where old and new, plain and patterned, and light and dark get together for some good old-fashioned fun. **A**

Above left: In the living room, five light clusters comprising the vintage 'Lightolier' chandelier from Rewire can be raised and lowered independently of one another. **Above right:** Ryan and Josh Brown sit on Monteverdi-Young chairs in striped Pierre Frey fabric. **Opposite:** In the sunroom, diagonals on the Lulu DK chocolate brown pillows, on the sides of the 1930s Italian sofa and armchairs, and on the base of the vintage Ico Parisi coffee table (from Pegaso) cut across the strong stripes of the custom rug from Decorative Carpets. A pair of symmetrical, circular topiaries also provides contrast to the room.

THE DESIGNERS CONFRONTED WALL COLORS ALREADY PAINTED. ROBIN'S-EGG BLUE, SEA-FOAM GREEN, CORAL. ALL DIFFERENT. ALL VIBRANT. ALL VERBOTEN BY THE BAUHAUS.



Josh Brown, who worked for furniture designer and manufacturer Michael Rudin before founding the design firm with Ryan, his brother in 2000, custom-designed the cabinetry, with a geometric pattern reminiscent of Chinese fretwork and the work of 1970s design icon David Hicks. The gold-leafed coffee table is from Lawson-Fenning. *Opposite:* In the small breakfast nook, Josh and Ryan paired Kartell's 'Eros' chairs designed by Philippe Starck with a marble-topped 'Op Ellipse' table from Blackman Cruz.