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# An Inside Look at the Client-Designer Team

by Patricia Follert

Client Anna G. visited interior designer Laura Cunningham's home as part of the 2000 Historical Holiday House Tour, loved what she saw and followed up two years later with a call to Laura. They have been working together since April 2002.

Purple, green and pink are Anna's favorite colors, and therefore the M.O. of the interior design plan for this young wife and mother of three boys. The owner of a nursery school, she is an energetic, creative young woman with an eclectic outlook, an inveterate collector and a lover of bold, striking colors.

In the two years since she'd seen Laura's home, Anna had moved into her own custom-built, three-story home and decorated much of it herself. Upstairs, five bedrooms and five baths were completed. Behind the



Selecting the perfect green for the Victorian loveseat

spacious entry hall and the unfinished living and dining rooms were a hot pink-walled kitchen and a welcoming family room in rich brown tones that

was twice the size of the living room. What Anna needed was help with the public rooms—especially the living room, “as it is square and the first room people will see.”

Anna had already painted the dining room walls a deep, rich plum with white-paneled wainscoting. She then turned to Laura, who began by using several pieces Anna had collected over the years to play up the rich, strong color scheme. “Laura helped me decide what to put on the walls, such as the arrangement of the purple-and-white plates above the sideboard and the two four-foot, colorful paintings of flowers and birds I had salvaged from the fronts of two barrels. Now, they are on either side of the entrance to the dining room—a dramatic touch, a surprise, which I like every room to have—it’s fun.” Anna and Laura have also chosen a Pierre Frey fabric called *Hermine Bougeon* for the dining room chairs and a Robert Allen silk fabric in shades of purples and off-white called *Mayfair* for the swags and drapery panels on the dining room windows.

Today Anna and Laura are in the elegant square living room, looking at swatches for the tufted Victorian loveseat, poised beneath an oval, intricately carved gilt mirror, which echoes the carved back and legs of the loveseat. The loveseat and mirror, like so many other pieces incorporated into the overall design plan, belonged to Anna prior to the decorating project. The two women went through her entire trove, deciding which to use, which to store. To Anna's delight, everything they are using “works”—while Laura



choosing fabrics

says that it seems to be a fact that the things you love go well together.

In this room, where the walls had been painted a light mint and the ceiling a soft green with a blue tint, the first order of decorating was to choose the window treatments, because that's where the main fabric pattern would be used. “Always begin with the main pattern,” advises Laura, “No matter where it will be used in the room.”

The fabric Anna chose is a chinoiserie from Travers called *Chinese Garden*. The pattern depicts Oriental figures in a garden, and the predominant colors are pink-coral, green and a bit of amethyst (to tie in with the dining room) on a pale cream background.

The living room's white transom windows, with their extended trim and recessed cornices, use an architectural detail to divide the greenish-blue ceiling color from the light mint on the walls. This structural aspect of the house has been turned into an interior design asset, as it frames the fabric valance of the window treatments and acts as an additional design detail in the room.

Laura has brought 21 swatches culled from 10 fabric houses—a veritable garden from which to choose the perfect green for the loveseat. For a good half hour, designer and client talk swatches—too yellow against the curtains? A damask with a raised pattern of oak leaves? Pattern too busy—perhaps for a throw pillow? Are they sturdy enough to stand up to three