



Forget chocolates — for this interior designer, life is like a box of crayons.

By Connie Dufner



Mary Anne Smiley created the countertop from a photograph by Richard Bettinger of Dallas printed on metal. Covered in a layer of glass, it is seen here from an upper floor.

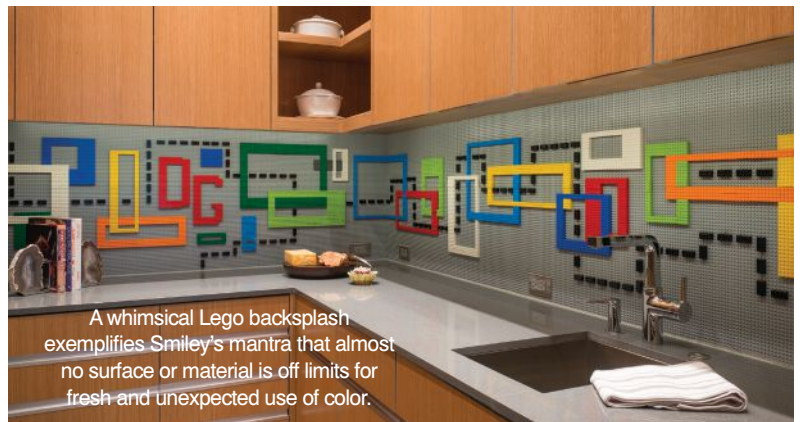


Tanner Lawley's painting *How Deep is Your Love* creates a focal point behind a banquette custom made with an acrylic back so as not to obscure the view.

# Chroma-Crush

As a child, Dallas designer Mary Anne Smiley fell in love with Crayolas. “Color is my thing. It always has been.” Cue the portfolio, in which room after boldly bright room wows. Is that a Lego backsplash in the kitchen? Wait, there’s more — a countertop fabricated from a Richard Bettinger photograph; vibrant yellow Knoll Womb chairs flanking a statement gold fire screen; orange chairs and blue lights and cherry red pillows — baby, it’s hue! “I like playful and I like childish. I think about color like children do, and I want to always be able to do that,” says Smiley. We visited with her about her appetite for color.

Connie Dufner is the Dallas correspondent for *817 Home*.



A whimsical Lego backsplash exemplifies Smiley's mantra that almost no surface or material is off limits for fresh and unexpected use of color.



Kitchen artwork *Horizon* is by glass artist Carlyn Ray and architect Emily Teng Yan. A custom cowhide rug anchors one of two dining tables in the color-filled 22,000-square-foot house.

*Photos by Danny Piassick*

**817 Home** Did I hear that right? You wanted to eat the crayons?

**Mary Anne Smiley** Yes, when I was a kid, I could almost taste those colors in the crayon box. I could almost eat them, they were so yummy to me. It's a heart thing with me, love at first sight with color.

**817** And still...?

**M.A.S.** My living room has orange, red, citrus, shocking pink, lime green and turquoise. I always will gravitate to those colors.

**817** Tell us about the Dale Chihuly installation that helped to create your reputation for masterful use of color.

**M.A.S.** There was a photograph published many years ago, in 2008, that I get more inquiries about than any other. That was when I first started to be known for use of color. The room is very neutral, except for the art and those Chihuly bowls. I wanted to create color in the room, to bring that wall down to a human scale. I had contacted a

gallery here that carried Chihuly and told them what I was looking for — six pieces that were different colors. I was told that the gallery did not have the bowls and that the artist would have to come out and put them up. I told the owner that we wouldn't be working together after all. I started researching, and finally I found most of the pieces in Canada. They are quite exquisite, and I had acrylic stands made specifically for each one. They disappear, and all you really see are those bowls, that pop of color. It must have worked; everybody still talks about that room. It's the same family; it's still just like that. It was a very important project for us.

**817** You are known for your use of color. So, why so much white?

**M.A.S.** When I was in college, we were studying black and white in photography. The teacher told us that every photograph should have pure black and pure white because that will allow all of the tones in between to show up. Somewhere in every project, I use Pure White paint by Sherwin-

Williams. I use a lot of art to bring color into my projects. Like the museums and galleries, I know that any color other than Pure White won't show my art off to its best advantage. I use gallons and gallons of Pure White. I want the color to be in the art and furnishings, not on the walls.

**817** Biggest mistake you see?

**M.A.S.** Any time anybody paints color on a wall, they're taking a big chance. The biggest proportion of surface in any room is the walls. They instantly become dominant. I want what goes on that wall to be the main focus. Say you love sapphire blue and paint a wall in that color. While it's very exciting, people don't realize that anything else with color in the room will wash out. There's no contrast there.

**817** What's the difference between a trend and a look that lasts?

**M.A.S.** If you get the principles right, the trends are not important. It will be timeless. If you don't get them right, it's not going to look good now, and it's not going to look good later, either. ■