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4 Living Room Risks Designers Are Glad They Took in 2026

By LACEY RAMBURGER Published on 05/31/26



Credit: Design by Sarah P. Major / Photo by Adam Kane Macchia

Sure, you can play your design decisions neutral and safe, but some of the most memorable rooms out there are ones where the designer or homeowner took pattern, color, or overall concept risks. We spoke with designers who shared some of recent big risks they took when designing a living room.

The final results left them with zero regrets—and living rooms that are cozy spots to gather *and* colorful, personal, and one-of-a-kind.

MEET THE EXPERT

- Sarah P. Major is the owner and principal designer for Sarah P. Major Interior Design LLC.
- Tracy Morris is the principal designer for Tracy Morris Design.
- Emily Mackie is the founder and an interior designer for Inspired Interiors

Pairing a Mural with Ornate Millwork



Credit: Designer: Sarah P. Major Interior Design

In this colorful living room, designer Sarah Major decided a statement mural was *exactly* what this space needed, even though it already had impressive original millwork.

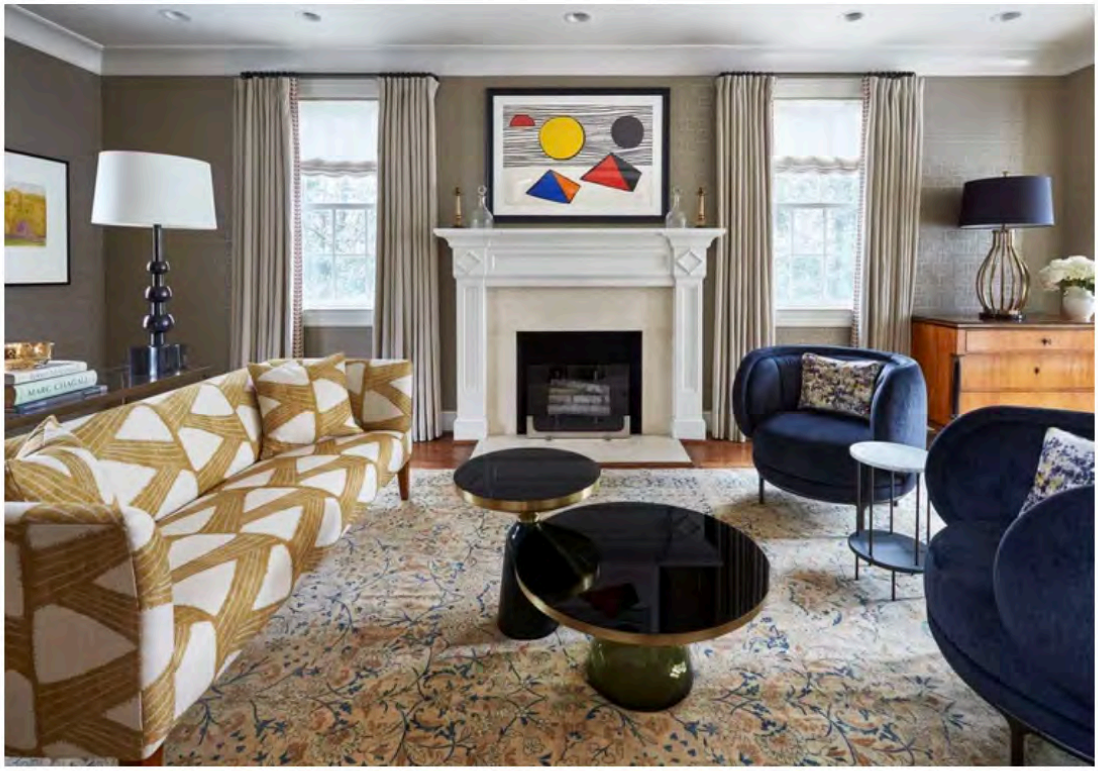
"I recently included this Iskel for Schumacher forest scene in a client's living room," Major tells. "The space was filled with original Victorian millwork that, while beautiful, was a bit stuffy on its own. Installing this mural on the remaining wall space really punched up the room to help make it feel dynamic and current."

Although a mural usually captures your attention, the forest scenery doesn't overpower the room in this case.

"I love the way the green and blue complement the rich tones of the oak, and the texture of the leaves reads so vibrant and pulls out the original fireplace tiling," Major says of the landscape drop.

The millwork still shines, as does the statement artwork over the fireplace.

Using a Patterned Sofa



Credit: Designer: Tracy Morris / Photographer: Greg Powers

"One design risk I'm so glad we took in this living room was leaning into bold contrast and mixing styles more intentionally," Tracy Morris, principal designer for Tracy Morris Designs, says.

The gold patterned sofa, in particular, is noteworthy. Patterned sofas are bold and a big commitment, but Morris decided to jump in.

"It brings so much personality and energy to the space without overwhelming it," Morris says. "Pairing that with the deep blue sculptural chairs added another layer of richness and kept the room from feeling predictable."

Morris says she was also more gutsy with mixing traditional and modern elements in this space.

"It's a great reminder that a few thoughtful risks can make a space feel far more interesting and personal," she says.

Designing the Front Room as a Hotel Lobby



Credit: Designer: Emily Mackie

When Emily Mackie, founder and interior designer for Inspired Interiors, decided to turn a midcentury modern home a studio where she both lives and works, her living room options were essentially limitless.

Rather than sticking to a basic living room, however, she opted to take an unexpected risk by turning the living room into what she calls a miniature hotel lobby that's perfect for curling up as one might in a typical living room as well as welcoming design clients.

"It greets people with a warm fireplace, a friendly AM/PM bar for coffee in the morning and drinks in the afternoon, as well as cafe-style seating along the windows," Mackie says. "It's a unique layout that really creates hospitality in the home, and a room that normally would be like a formal living room that no one uses becomes the one room everyone wants to go to."

Mackie says that's what marks a design win in her book, "when you can take a space that no one knew what to do with, and it becomes the room everyone wants to use."

Going Bold With Burgundy



Credit: Designer: Jasmin Reese Interiors / Photographer: Michael Alan Kaskel

"One of my favorite recent projects was fully soaking a room in deep burgundy—walls, trim, and ceiling," says Jasmin Reese, residential luxury designer for Jasmin Reese Interiors. "People tend to get nervous about color at that level, worrying it will make a space feel smaller, but it often does the opposite. It gives the room a clear point of view."

As you can see, Reese included other prints and patterns that could have made the space feel overstimulating, especially with such a bold color choice. However, she notes that once the lighting and art were in place, the space felt complete and grounded.