PETER MARGONELLI

SKY-HIGH STYLE

WHILE IT'S EASY TO LET VERTICAL WALLS TAKE THE SPOTLIGHT, CASTING A COLORFUL SPELL ON THE HORIZONTAL "FIFTH WALL" CAN RAISE A ROOM'S DESIGN BONA FIDES TO SPECTACULAR NEW HEIGHTS. WHETHER THE GOAL IS TO JAZZ UP WHITE WALLS WITH AN EYE-CATCHING JOLT FROM ABOVE OR TO BATHE AN ENTIRE SPACE FROM TOP TO BOTTOM IN A SINGLE COLOR, THESE UNEXPECTED CEILINGS PROVE THAT THE REAL POWER LIES IN LOOKING UP.

PRODUCED AND WRITTEN BY HILLARY BROWN

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: RICHARD POWERS; SIMON BROWN; DOUGLAS FRIEDMAN; ERIC PIASECKI/OTTO.

1 & 2. COLORFUL CONTRASTS

In the glamorous sitting room of his Upper East Side town house (previous page), Jeffrey Bilhuber added an unexpectedly modern touch to neutral grasscloth walls and an array of neoclassical furniture by coating the ceiling in a glossy, fresh chartreuse. In the bright, airy living room of a client's 1908 Colonial in Seattle (above), he paired white plaster walls with an always-flattering slipper-pink hue.

3. ALL TOGETHER NOW

To make the 15-foot-tall ceilings of a Manhattan bedroom feel more cocoon-like than cavernous, designer Bruce Bierman enveloped the entire space from top to toe in a single shade of soothing periwinkle blue, extending the sumptuous quilted headboard to sit just under the crown moldings.

4. UNDER THE WAVES

Celerie Kemble drew inspiration from the famously crystal-blue waters of the Dominican Republic to highlight the architecture of the wood-beamed ceiling in her tropical island getaway at Playa Grande. By painting the ceiling a shade darker than the barely there aqua walls, Kemble created a tonal variation she likens to that of the ocean's horizon, where sky meets sea.

5. SECRET HIDEAWAY

Designer Beata Heuman leaned into the intimate scale of a client's London bedroom by carving out a cozy curtained alcove for the single bed; the sumptuous color palette of sapphire blue and garnet red creates the ultimate jewel box retreat. Bright white trim adds a dramatic, graphic edge.

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: STEPHEN KARLISCH; ANNIE SCHLECHTER; ERIC PIASECKI/OTTO; RICHARD POWERS.

6. PAINT THE TOWN RED

Rather than interrupting the flow of this dazzling Dallas living room with a jarring white ceiling, Michelle Nussbaumer opted for a fiery vermillion red that perfectly matches the custom-colored, hand-painted wallpaper. While not for the faint of heart, the dramatic hue allows the silvery flora and fauna along the walls—as well as the opulent pagoda-shaped daybed—to be the true stars of the space.

7. HEAVENLY RETREAT

For the next best thing to being outdoors, take a cue from designer Eddie Lee and paint ceilings a sparkling shade of blue that conjures images of clear skies on a cloud-free day. Walls papered in a chinoiserie-inspired scene complete the dreamy, garden-like feel of this chic Manhattan bathroom.

8. AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

For the living room of a family's retreat in the Greek islands, Isabel Lopez Quesada bathed the floor *and* ceiling in a cool Mediterranean blue. By using the same ethereal hue on both surfaces, she created an airy hangout spot where the furniture seems to practically float in midair.

9. GRAPHICALLY SPEAKING

Steven Gambrel drew inspiration from the old-world glamour of London's Connaught Hotel when he designed this sophisticated-but-playful bedroom for a Manhattan client's young son. Reflecting the bed's punchy persimmon hue on the ceiling makes for an energetic contrast to the more grown-up elegance of the chocolate-brown walls and sepia-toned photography.

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