

MAKEOVER ANNIE SELKE

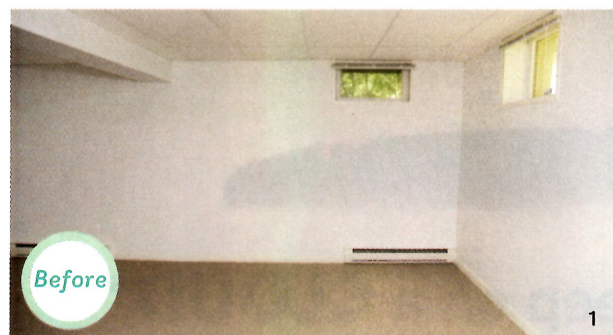
PART 7

The Lower Level

A basement room doesn't have to be drab and dreary. Just look what happens with a jolt of color and light.



Interview by
CHRISTINE PITTEL



1. Standard basement windows make the room look uninviting.
2. New windows let in more light and change the whole feeling of the space.
3. Bright Sky tiles from Nemo Tile give the bathroom a glow. Hothouse rug from Dash & Albert.
4. The seating is as colorful as the artwork. Annie Selke repainted vintage chairs in Benjamin Moore's Eccentric Lime and re-covered a bench in blue "pleather" from Osgood Textile. Walls painted Farrow & Ball's Skylight.
5. The mural is a detail from a kimono, part of the Japanese Flowers collection at surfaceview.com. Maple cabinetry and platform bed by KraftMaid. Vintage Arne Jacobsen Swan chair.

I think of a basement as dark—

We don't refer to this as the basement! And when people do, I say, 'No, no, no. It's the lower level.' I don't want anyone to think I've stuck my child in the basement, so I've worked extra-hard to make it nice.

How old is your daughter? Charlotte is 17, and I gave her a choice. She could have the room next to mine, or this. And when I told her what we were going to do with it, she said, 'Great, more space.' It's like a mini studio apartment, and she can play her music as loud as she likes.

What was your first move? John Gilmer, my architect, had a great idea that I would never have thought of: 'Let's move lots of dirt away from the foundation and cut out real windows and have light flood

in.' That piece of genius instantly transformed the space.

So where's the ground level now?

At the bottom of the new windows. She looks out at grass, but it's a long view. And the dogs come up and look in—'Hi! How are you doing?'

It's as if all the color and pattern you shied away from upstairs burst out down here. What's on the wall? Paint? Fabric?

No. It's a mural, from this company called Surface View, in the UK. I came across it in a British magazine, and they have all these incredible images to choose from—paintings, architectural drawings, sculpture, modern photography. I could spend days on their Web site.

What did you pick?

I let Charlotte choose. It's based on a Japanese kimono from the col-

lection of the Victoria & Albert, blown up in scale. I didn't want to do a big headboard in here because the ceiling is low, about eight feet. But the room needed something dramatic, and this is it. It doesn't take up any extra space and it adds a lot of look.

Some people might stop there, but not you.

I wanted the colors to move through the room. To me, that makes the mural part of the room, rather than just an artwork on the wall. You can have the image made into window shades, too.

So it wraps the room.

And then we brought in even more color and pattern to keep it from being too matchy, as you see in so many rooms for kids. You need to create a little chaos for them, so when clothes are hanging over the chairs and notebooks

and hairbands are all over the floor, it all fits in.

I feel like teenagers lead a multicolored life.

And when she's older, how could the room evolve?

We could take the vintage Mexican serape off the bed and go more monochromatic with white linens. Repaint the furniture in shades of cream. It's great to have space for chairs—and that bench doubles as a table—so she can entertain her friends. And if you really want to make it livable, you've got to have a great bathroom.

Why did you run the bathroom tile vertically?

To make the ceiling look higher. I fell in love with that blue glass tile. It feels so serene. And there are plenty of drawers for her hair dryer and all that stuff. She's got her own suite down here, and what every teenager needs—some privacy. ●

Get It Right

- Lighting can make all the difference in a basement room. Stay away from hanging lights if the ceiling is low. Go with lamps and recessed lights, on dimmers.
- Pure New Zealand wool wall-to-wall carpeting helps dispel that basement feeling. Selke used a Broome St. carpet in Desert Fawn by Bellbridge.
- A mural offers a modern take on wallpaper. Choose from hundreds of images at surfaceview.com; they'll help you scale the design to make it work for your wall.

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