

# on color

## Casually elegant neutrals

When most people think of a room dominated by neutrals, they tend to think of a space aching for color. But, says interior designer Suzanne Kasler, this does not have to be the case. "What's wonderful about designing with a neutral color palette is that you can go from it into any color, or you can do the entire room in it." Natural neutrals offer "a warmer and deeper approach" than a strictly white palette, and they afford a feeling of casual elegance without having an overly "decorated" or trendy look. There are, however, some things to consider when designing a neutral tone-on-tone room. Below, Kasler shares her design wisdom.

—TRAVIS NEIGHBOR WARD



**DESIGNER'S BOARD** Above: Among Suzanne Kasler's favorite neutrals are the Shagreen parchment-colored wall covering by Clarence House and the bone white Ann Sacks glass tiles, both shown above. For a guide to these and the other materials that she chose for this board, see our **Resources** guide starting on page 66.

## the neutral approach

**Consider the architecture of the room.** For a neutral tone-on-tone palette to work best, Kasler says, you need a strong architectural space and detailing. If it isn't strong, she notes, "it won't look like you've done a lot."

**Think in layers.** A room designed with a neutral color scheme can stand alone if you incorporate a multitude of rich and/or luxurious textures, Kasler says, "but you have to have enough or it won't look like a finished space." That can include anything from a natural sisal rug and striped linen seat cushions to woven wooden window shades or glass tiles.

In the Kasler-designed kitchen shown here, a golden Champagne-colored glaze on the maple cabinets complements the tile backsplash above the range. The walls, trim and ceiling are all painted with Benjamin Moore's Bone White. Granite countertops, walnut flooring and sisal rugs



enhance the scheme—as well as the chandelier, which adds a delightfully elegant touch.

**In the kitchen, use appliances to your advantage.** Because the kitchen includes fewer fabric options than other rooms, you have to be even more creative with layering. But, appliances can help. To stick with a neutral scheme, you can panel the refrigerator to match cabinets, or have a carpenter create a custom cover for the range hood, as Kasler did in the kitchen shown here.

**Avoid pink and peach undertones.** They tend to look less crisp and elegant than, say, neutrals with more of a green or gray undertone. Among Kasler's favorites are: Benjamin Moore's Muslin, Gentle Cream, Bone White and Elephant Tusk ("it's really creamy, I used it for my own family room," she says). She also favors ICI's Parchment and Georgian Ivory, a deeper tone, both of which are available through Home Depot.