SouthernAccents

BEAUTIFUL HOMES, GRACIOUS LIVING, A SENSE OF PLACE



DECORATING Q&A

A Chat With Bunny Williams

The New York designer applies lessons she learned growing up in Virginia to nearly all of her projects. The result is interiors that meld understated sophistication with an awareness of what makes us happy and comfortable



BUNNY WILLIAMS is hard to pin down, but it's only because when you do catch her, she gives you her undivided attention. A bundle of energy who balances owning a successful shop, Treillage, Ltd., with running an iconic design business and writing best-selling books, she delights in friendships and history, family and tradition. Williams is a master at uncontrived style and takes the ultimate practical approach to dressing a client's home—taking into consideration their hobbies, their comfort zones, and their aesthetics. As concerned with creating



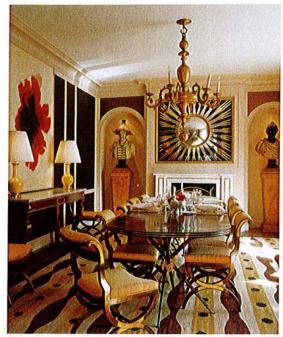
beautiful spaces as she is with providing a spot for toys or a sentimental collection, this designer considers the whole package.

Southern Accents: How have your Southern roots influenced the way you decorate?

Bunny Williams: My Virginia roots taught me how to make a house welcoming, and I think that this should always be an underlying feeling in my work.

Your spaces always feel approachable. What are the keys to avoiding a showroom look and instead creating a space that invites you in? Overdecoration and being too "matchy-matchy" can cause a room to be too

Shown in her New York apartment, designer Bunny Williams grew up in Virginia, near Charlottesville. The rough-hewn spirit of this living room (above right) is given sophistication with fine art and a complex selection of patterns and texture.



much of a showplace. Remember that rooms are meant to be used and should be relaxing. The design makes a room much more approachable.

I love the way you use antique textiles, and they show up in a lot of your spaces. What are some of your favorite resources?

Using antique textiles in a room takes the edge off the newness of everything and gives the room a softer, more evolved look. I find old textiles from Virginia Di Sciascio and Laura Fisher in New York, as well as various textile dealers at pier shows. EBay is also a good source if you know what you are looking for.

Your master bedroom in Manhattan [pictured above right] has the most divine bed I have ever laid eyes on. Where did you get that chic mirrored bed and that incredible embroidery? John Rosselli, my husband, bought the bed for me at a Sotheby's auction. It was from the estate of Dorothy Hirshon, a very stylish woman who was the first wife of William Paley, the founder of CBS. The



Often called a traditionalist, Williams delights in mixing modern and old, as she does in this dining room (above left) with an Allegra Hicks rug, contemporary art, and a collection of Regency-style pieces. The designer's bedroom (above) is a calming tone-on-tone space with great textural interest, from the fabrics to the framed samplers that flank the vintage headboard.

	Embrace	Avoid
Greenery	All magnolia leaf and white pine cedars.	Too many garlands.
Lighting	Always use white lights.	Large multicolored bulbs.
Hostess gifts	Specialty foods, such as Virginia peanuts—anything that can be used during the holidays.	Cut flowers. A hostess has no time to arrange them, and they can be very awkward.
Flowers	Keep flowers to one color scheme—all white or pinks and reds.	Using out-of-season flowers. Tulips or peonies look silly in the winter.
Palette	All green and white.	Too much gold and silver. Use only as accents.
Cocktails	Punch.	Gin and tonic.

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bed was made in Paris by Serge Roche in the 1940s. I had the embroidery done in India.

I understand you have a furniture collection coming out this spring. What inspired you?

I have always liked finding antiques—special pieces for my projects. It has become harder to continue doing this, so I decided to create a collection, called BeeLine Home. The pieces will be finely crafted, ordered in limited quantity with numbered labels, and will be produced for only one year. They will be available at

BUNNY'S FAVORITES

Paint Colors

1. Mosstone (17-0525 TPX) by Pantone "A wonderful dark mossy green that is fabulous for a library or study. Such an amazing neutral that combines beautifully with many other colors. It is the color of my study/dining room in my New York apartment."

2. Impala (13-1025 TPX) by Pantone "This is a delicious color that is part yellow, part apricot and really glows. My living room in the country has been this color for 20 years."

3. Glass Slipper (1632) by Benjamin Moore

"This serene blue-gray works almost as a neutral and is a soothing color one never tires of."

4. Cream Soda (1082) by Benjamin Moore

"This is almost the color of a brown paper bag. It is a medium brown that has an amazing life."









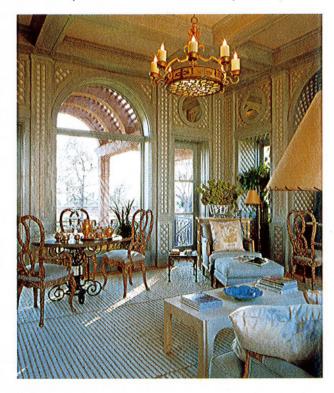


Fabrics

- 5. Peloton in breakaway (92518-01) by Rogers & Goffigon, Ltd. "A wonderful heavy beige linen that is perfect for upholstery."
- **6. Ocelot in teak/cafe (10877-05) by Cowtan & Tout** "A deep accent fabric for a chair or bench."
- 7. Patra in robin's egg (135N67) by Raoul Textiles "A soft gray/blue printed linen that makes a room soothing and cozy when used on walls and curtains."
- 8. Velvet Strie in olive (2007146-30) by Suzanne Rheinstein through Lee Jofa "This rich moss-green velvet is another perfect upholstery fabric."
- 9. Campanelle (5601) by Fortuny "A rich bronze and antique gold fabric that gives any scheme that rich accent." $\,$

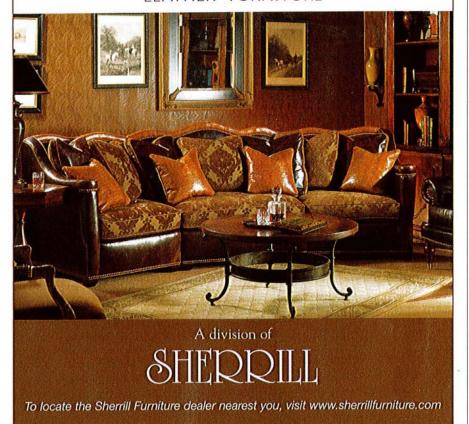


Leather-studded walls and midcentury-style chairs (above) give a traditional library a modern edge; a push-pull of warm tones, textural fabrics, and modern accents build on the 21st-century vibe. Lattice and an airy palette reflected in light-colored furniture (below) suggest this house's tropical location and a serene, if opulent, retreat.



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several locations, including John Rosselli, Mecox Gardens, Hollyhock, Halcyon House Antiques, Summerfields, and Mrs. Howard.

You worked with Sister Parish and Albert Hadley early in your career. What are some things you learned from these legendary designers?

From Mrs. Parish, I learned more than anything how to arrange furniture in a room, and from Albert, the importance of scale and proportion. If a room has a fireplace or a wall for a television, then usually the furniture will be grouped toward the wall, but if the room has no focus, the furniture arrangement can float in the center. A room should have at least one seating group that can accommodate six to eight people. This might be made up

66 I have many leopard-print dog beds around each house for the dogs to curl up in.99

—designer Bunny Williams

of one sofa, four chairs, and benches, or two sofas and four chairs. What is important is that the group relate to the architecture.

What is the most common request from your clients?

They are asking for more casual, media-friendly rooms. People do not want to live so formally. Media rooms are great fun. We love movies, so having a space with a large screen is a real luxury. The most expensive media room is one that has raised platforms and real theater chairs in rows. It is luxurious, but the room can only be used as a theater. However, a long narrow space with moveable chairs

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that can be pushed aside can also function as a place to gather or a project room. It is important that each chair have a small table for drinks and that there be a nearby microwave for popcorn and a cabinet with supplies such as bowls and napkins. Lighting should come from sconces and overhead sources and should be on dimmers.

How do you make family spaces kid- and pet-friendly, yet attractive and comfortable?

I often use faux-fur throws, Indian quilts, or other pieces to wrap the sofa cushions, not only so the dogs can feel at home but also to protect the furniture. I have many leopard-print dog beds around each house for the dogs to curl up in. I also find that attractive baskets that fit under tables or on bookcases are a quick way of tidying up toys, magazines, and newspapers.

What color palette are you most attracted to at the moment?

The colors I use do not change much over time, but I am having fun mixing strong, clear colors with subtle, more neutral shades.

What do you consider to be the foundation of a room?

A well-thought-out floor plan. A no-fail arrangement consists of a 7-foot sofa, a 4-by-2-foot coffee table, one upholstered chair, one bergère or other upholstered chair, a pair of open-arm chairs that can be moved around, one 30-by-20-inch bench, two odd end tables, and two low drink tables.

What is your favorite place to go for inspiration?

My gardens. The colors inspire me, and the quiet allows my mind to wander through all the places I have been to find the perfect idea for a space. For details, see Sourcebook, page 194.