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# VERANDA







ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

# BUNNY WILLIAMS

## MAKING A BEE LINE HOME

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN BESSLER TEXT BY JUDITH NASATIR PRODUCED BY CAROLYN ENGLEFIELD

What's in a name? When it fits its owner like a well-worn custom sabot, everything. Take Bunny Williams. With Virginia-bred graciousness and Manhattan-based moxie, this globe-trotting grand dame of American interior design and best-selling author possesses a fertile creativity and more natural energy than that everlasting, battery-operated bunny—as the launch of her BeeLine Home collection demonstrates. In the works for four to five years, BeeLine Home offers design-hungry consumers entrée to Williams' celebrated eclectic sensibility and unerring sense of quality through affordable, limited-edition furnishings





OPENING PAGE: Bunny Williams with furnishings from new BeeLine Home collection, including Rosewood Table, Eclipse chairs and Lotus Hurricane. LEFT: Turquoise Glazed Ceramic lamp on Paris-inspired, 1940s-style Hourglass table, Églomisé coffee table, Nailhead sofa draped in hand-embroidered Arabesque throw with Taj pillows. Hand-carved 1930s-inspired Garden Panel. BELOW, FROM TOP: BeeLine's mid-20th-century-style Shadowbox mirror. Small-scale models of collection. Parish cachepot.



and accessories, now available at a select network of shops across the country.

Williams founded her namesake interiors firm twenty-odd years ago, after a decade working with the legendary design office of Parish-Hadley. With her husband John Rosselli, an equally insatiable collector and traveler, Williams later launched Treillage, a retail boutique filled with exquisite objects for home and garden discovered on the couple's odysseys. When it comes to her latest endeavor, she says: "Everybody reaches a 'now what?' point in their careers. I've been lucky to have the opportunity to buy beautiful furniture. I wanted to produce pieces of real quality, pieces that would stand up to anything, including period furniture."



Williams' honey of a hive is abuzz with thirty or so designs, painstakingly crafted and hand-finished. Materials range from rosewood to shagreen, from stone to mango wood to mahogany, from glass and *verre églomisé* to copper and beyond. Embroideries are meticulously, minutely hand-stitched in India; finishes are hand-applied, lustrous, elegant. Williams explains, "I wanted pieces with a unique sensibility, pieces with beautiful finishes. I knew that in order to achieve that, I'd have to be fussy enough to work with the factory." To that end, she selected an American company that imports some pieces from Indonesia, where she travels regularly to provide hands-on scrutiny. The upholstery is made in California. "The factory," says Williams, "has been so recep-



LEFT: Palladian Partners desk with crotch mahogany top with Party Hat lamp, original Twigs mirror in Williams' apartment, Bottoms-Up drinks table and Tote Debris, a brass wastebasket. ABOVE, FROM TOP: Ebony Anglo coffee table, inspired by an auction find. Porter drinks table in honey-toned bird's-eye maple. English Crewel Work pillow and Naughty Miss Bunny throw, hand-embroidered in India, nestle into the T42 tufted barrel-back chair. Forged Hurricane lamp in background.



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tive to finding and sourcing things for us. The thing I've been so concerned about is the quality. When you look at an old piece from underneath, it's just as beautiful there as it is on top. I wanted these pieces to have that same quality. I don't want the collection to be too grand, but I want people to know that they're getting quality."

The designs encompass the kinds of things that Williams says "are important for every room." These include tables of various shapes and sizes—dining, coffee, drinks, bedside—and various periods—eighteenth century to Art Deco and beyond—and finishes from gilt to old gold and more. There is a nailhead-trim tight-back sofa that is deep, firm and roomy enough for throw pillows, and a tufted barrel-back chair and ottoman. There is the throne-like Regale armchair and the Eclipse chair with a swank, elongated oval back, splayed and tapered legs. The Regale chair has an eighteenth-century-style slip seat for quick and easy changes.

The collection includes two desks—one Palladian in spirit, the other, refreshingly modernist and cantilevered. A trove of accessories extends to mirrors, gorgeously hand-embroidered pillows and throws, a hand-carved wall panel, hurricanes, a cachepot and more. There is, as well, a sextet of memorable lamps. "Each item has a special thought behind it, representing something I've been inspired by, coveted or own."

Williams is especially fond of "things that are sort of fancy, but also not fancy," things that she can "dress up and dress down." In other words, she likes the mix and the idea of rooms that look spontaneously put together. "I think of it as the yin and yang of a room—there's a contrast to each component. It's much more interesting to balance periods and styles in a room where each piece stands on its own. It's fun if you can reuse traditional elements in a modern context. What I love is a very modern desk with columns from an eighteenth-century library. The juxtapositions are so interesting and become classic."

Because the personality of each element in a room is so critical to Williams, she doesn't want people to think of BeeLine as an entire look to be bought as a whole. "Maybe you have granny's table," she explains. "If you put white painted modern chairs around it, they'll freshen it up." Her insistence on limited-edition production comes from a similar source: "I get bored when I see the same table year after year, and I can't use the same design more than once or twice. That's why I decided to make each piece for one collection." Her plan is to introduce a new collection each year and to keep tight control of the quantities.

Already at work on the next BeeLine introductions, Williams is, as ever, fussing over production. "The most fun is trying to find the artisans and what they do best. In Vietnam, it's lacquer. In India, it's needlework. I'm hoping that as BeeLine grows, we'll be able to cull items from all over the world and use people for what they are really good at doing." So what's in a name? Given the designer's hopes that "BeeLine will be bigger than me," it is quite a lot, even for the energetic Queen B. □

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