



Southern Charlotte Lucas

According to North Carolina-based interior designer Charlotte Lucas, Southern decor—distinguished by its casual elegance and incorporation of bright colors and family heirlooms like chests and china sets—is in the midst of an evolution. “I think that we’re modernizing the way Southerners live,” she says from her studio in downtown Charlotte. “My grandmother had her formal dining room and formal living room and formal sitting room, but as we evolve a little bit, those spaces don’t really exist anymore in houses.” As the Southern way of life has become more casual, Lucas has focused her work on the juxtaposition between contemporary and traditional—finding tension that’s created when an antique rug is paired with a modern chandelier, for example. “I think that when you have a whole room of traditional items, then you don’t really see the special quality of the items,” she says.

Drawing inspiration from sources as varied as a photo of a Moroccan archway, which recently influenced a client’s window cornices, or the hand-painted 19th-century panels from a Charleston estate on display in her own dining room, Lucas’s interiors typically balance her signature mix of modern and vintage with splashes of unique color and varied textures and finishes. For Lucas, a project is never complete until she “accessorizes the room.” “It’s not going to reflect that family or that person unless you accessorize it with items from their house: picture frames, little pieces from their travels, art collected over time,” she explains. After all, a Southern home isn’t complete without its heirlooms. “People’s eyes are opening to a whole new world of design, but [they’re] also keeping those rich traditions in place.”

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Clockwise from above: Kelly Wearstler wallpaper and abstract art accent a client’s bar in Spartanburg, South Carolina; contrasting colors brighten up a window seat; preserved original wood paneling gives a living room a traditional feel; black-and-white portraits complement Mid-Century Modern furniture



