



Pretty in Permanence

BY ALYSON PITARRE



INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED DESIGNER SANDRA NUNNERLEY MASTERS THE ART OF CREATING TIMELESS INTERIORS THROUGH HER MODERN INTERPRETATION OF THE CLASSICS.

Sandra Nunnerley is acutely aware of the enduring nature of interior design. "Fashion may influence design," the New York-based designer is fond of saying, "but you can't change rooms every season." W Magazine has called her "one of the most fashionable designers" in New York, after all.

Nunnerley has cemented her place among the world's top designers. House & Garden UK selected her as one of 10 leading American designers. In 2017, she will appear on the Architectural Digest France International List, which honors 100 design talents worldwide — a distinction she has enjoyed multiple times. She remains keenly focused on her signature

style, one that is both modern and timeless, anchored in a sophisticated understanding of architecture, historical periods and art. Her work, which ranges from a glamorous NYC duplex that once belonged to Hollywood producer Jack Warner in the Sherry-Netherland Hotel to a project in Hong Kong to beachfront retreats in her native New Zealand, continues to garner praise for her characteristic style, often described as "contemporary with a classic twist," bringing together period pieces with modern design.

We recently caught up with the ever-stylish, New Zealand-born designer to ask her about her inspirations, what drives her design choices and how she has found her muse "in the world around us."



What inspires you?

Travel inspires me, as I often discover new artists or modes of expression that are not known at home. Each year, I make a point of going somewhere new. I've hiked to Machu Picchu in Peru and floated down the Sepik River in New Guinea. These are voyages of discovery, and although you never know exactly what you're going to take home from the experience, they're crucial to inspiration.

How much has your upbringing in New Zealand informed your style or your work?

My mother was a journalist and ensured that I had a broad cultural education. She would take me to every show that came to town. I had the best of the entire world at my fingertips growing up in beautiful New

Zealand. My inspiration came from history, art and fashion. I've always been drawn to the natural beauty of my surroundings and even now tend to gravitate to elegant but simple things.

In what ways has fashion inspired your work?

I agree with the brilliant French fashion designer Coco Chanel, who has always inspired me, when she said this: "Fashion is architecture: it is a matter of proportions."

How would you describe the way you live at home?

The way I live at home is similar to the way I encourage my clients to think about living in their

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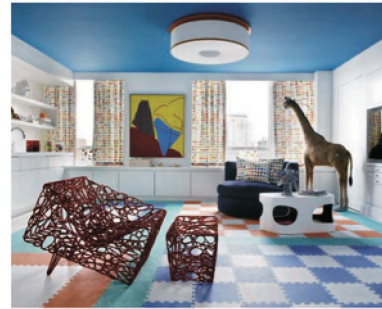
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What are some of your favorite architectural periods to work with and why?

I'm inspired by all architectural periods; I don't have a favorite one.

I'm not a minimalist, but I believe an interior look improves when the furnishings are pared down. It's when you give things breathing room that you reveal the shared line, shape, color and texture that allow pieces of disparate provenance to harmonize together in a room from any architectural period.

Designer Sandra Nunnerley used an understated pattern and sleek curves to call attention to the far end of a stunning Harborside apartment, where she left a sweeping view of New York undisturbed.



own homes: a home should be highly functional, but also reflective of the owner's passions and interests. My New York City townhouse brings a tasteful form-meets-function approach in each of its rooms, reflecting my own lifestyle and passion for travel and art.

Let's talk about your approach to color and texture. Can you describe your personal philosophy regarding these two elements? How do you balance the two, typically?

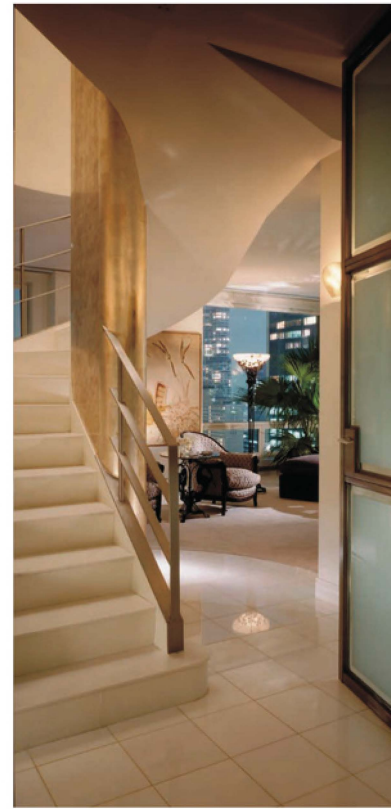
I personally love the interplay between fabrics,



PHOTOS ©PETER ESTERSON



For a duplex apartment with 360-degree views on the top two floors of the Sherry Netherland Hotel, Nunnerley complemented the loft-like floor plan and wall-to-wall Central Park views with lustrous finishes, including a silver-leaf screen and snakeskin ottoman.



textures and color. Color is sensual, subtle and bold. It makes a room come alive and is an essential part of my vocabulary as a designer. I can't think of any colors I dislike, but there are some I especially love — paper-bag brown, bitter chocolate, cinnamon, pistachio, cypress and grape. Off-beiges and pearlized grays I call "shadow colors" for the way they change with the light of the day, making it so interesting to enter a room throughout the day. As far as texture, I do like to use luxurious fabrics like silk and cashmere in combination with more humble materials like linen and grasscloth. In a recent project, I covered the foyer walls in sumptuous leather, the sitting room walls in fine Irish linen (ideal for hanging pictures), the dining room in sateen French gray wallpaper. I believe that having many different textures and rich colors in a room adds a constant sense of rediscovery.

Can you elaborate on your thoughts about blending contemporary and traditional design elements?

It's so important to mix contemporary elements into the most traditional interiors, because I strongly believe in breaking the rule that good design must be

filled with pieces from the same period. I love mixing traditional and modern, period pieces with contemporary design. It's the interplay between modern and traditional that creates dimension and depth in each interior.

Let's talk about the role of art in your work. What's your philosophy?

Art and design must both live in harmony together in any room. My background is in architecture and fine arts, which give a true depth to my work, bringing together the past and the present, with special attention to the role of art. I have always been fascinated by the cross-section of art and design. [Having worked at the Marlborough Gallery when she first moved to New York, Sandra has been a well-known member of the city's art cognoscenti ever since.]

What's the biggest mistake you see your clients making when it comes to selecting art?

The biggest mistake that I see clients make is that they don't trust their own instincts in selecting art, and oftentimes, they are concerned about where

the art work will be displayed. I encourage my clients to mix different kinds of art, such as tribal or folk art and sculpture, with more everyday things like books or whimsical pieces. This allows the eye to make new and unexpected discoveries. I also believe that great art should not be confined to the living room or other public spaces. It is important to incorporate art in a non-precious manner. I love hanging paintings on a large wall salon-style, for example, with a variety of sizes mixed together. Art should live throughout a house, including in more intimate spaces like kitchen and dining areas — even a powder room can be a great place to hang a piece of art.

What was one of the greatest design lessons you have learned along the way?

As I always tell my clients, you've got to get the bones right first. If you don't, you're going nowhere, no matter how hard you try. It begins with the architecture of the space and often involves reconfiguring layouts, altering dimensions, and adding or subtracting details to make spaces more functional and responsive to my clients' lifestyles. It is one of the greatest design lessons I've learned along the way.

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