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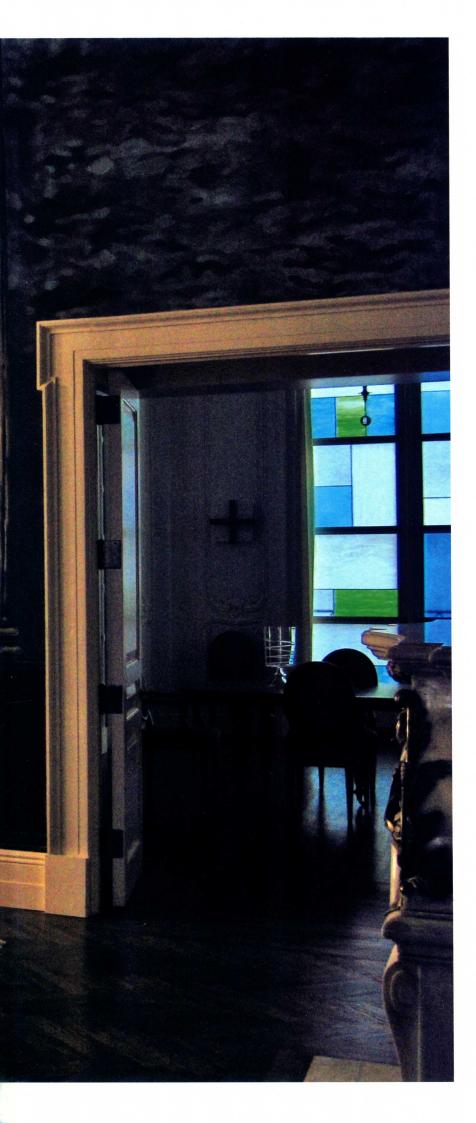


Introduction by Wendy Moonan

RIZZOLI

RICHARD GILLETTE

常州大学山书馆藏书章



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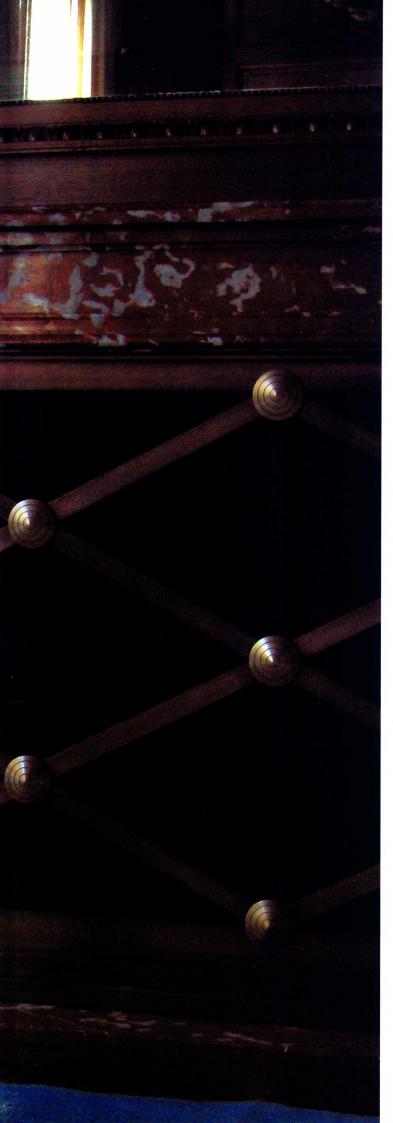
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"Every design project is different because he takes his style cues from diverse sources: a client's dream, a particular work of art, a textile, a souvenir from a trip abroad—or a 1930s Hollywood film.... This kind of decorating, with such a vast range of references, cannot be duplicated, which is why this book is worth studying—and is long overdue."

RICHARD GILLETTE

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Very simply, my main goals have always been centered on creativity. With aspirations to be an artist, an easel painter in particular, a major shift occurred while working on the renovation of a large apartment in New York. I was incorporating various forms of painting into the rooms while actualizing many aspects of interior design as I went along. My references were primarily drawn from artists and art history. Ultimately, this developed into a formula which would be the foundation of my professional career.

When the opportunity presented itself to create a book on my work, the archive that had been building over time immediately flashed across my mind. The realities of devoting the time required—attaining original film images, deciding which projects to select, and countless other concerns—seemed insurmountable. Then came the realization that this was an assignment no more daunting than an extensive design project, something I'm very familiar with. Within weeks I agreed to go for it, and the parallels have been very similar indeed.

I want to thank my colleague Daniel Solomon for his consistent willingness to assist in every aspect of this multifaceted endeavor, from its design to its content. For this book we have gathered together 20 design projects from 1975 to 2008. We've been extremely fortunate to be able to use photographs taken by some of the most top-notch photographers in the business. Their gracious help has been invaluable. I also want to thank everyone for permission granted to run images of all of the paintings and sculptures that appear on the following pages.

The work that I sometimes refer to as mine is, in reality, the result of the contributions of so many people. There's a cavalcade of architects, contractors, artisans, craftspeople, and specialized dealers; imagine credits rolling with a continuous stream of names at the end of a movie.

Throughout this book, what I hoped to express was something about the remarkable people involved, where the action took place, and what occurred on each of the projects. This led me to put down bits of recollections for each apartment, house, and garden. The twist here is that along with my work, we have also included images of the art that the designs were born of. This has afforded me the chance to give credit to these artistic champions who I am continuously moved by, and trust that you will be too.

INTRODUCTION by Wendy Moonan

The New York interior designer Richard Gillette is a bit of an enigma. He may be one of the most admired decorators in his profession but he is not well known personally.

While he has been featured in *The New York Times, Architectural Digest, Elle Décor*, and *House & Garden* today he does not maintain the meet-and-greet lifestyle of many of his colleagues. He doesn't run around town with an entourage. He doesn't appear at popular decorator-driven charity events. He keeps a low profile and is more likely to be spotted at the Metropolitan Museum than a furniture showroom.

An avid student of art history, Gillette says that as soon as he left upstate New York to attend college in Manhattan in the 1970s, "The Met became my home away from home." This is probably because, first and foremost, Richard Gillette is an artist. He trained at the School of Visual Arts in New York with such eminent instructors as Chuck Close and John Chamberlain and still does easel paintings for fun, wall murals for clients, album covers and backdrops for advertising and fashion shoots. "When I'm on a ladder all covered in paint I'm in heaven," he says.

His attraction to fine art has never waned.

"My references are primarily drawn from artists I admire and art history," says Gillette, who regularly visits museums and galleries. "Ultimately, this developed into a formula that would be the foundation of my professional career."

In the 20 short essays he has written for this book, he pairs each interior with a specific work of art that informed its style in some important way (such as palette, composition, or scale). The list includes Old Masters like Vermeer and Watteau, Orientalists like John Frederick Lewis, Surrealists like De Chirico, Cubists like Braque, and Abstract Expressionists like Rothko. The list is long.

Gillette follows no school of interior design; his spaces do not resemble English country houses, French chateaux, or Italian villas. Nor are they studies in minimalism. "A cookie-cutter signature style does not come naturally to me," he says. In fact, it is hard to identify a "Gillette look," though his interiors do tend to be theatrical. The look is decidedly eclectic.

"There is no period I don't love," he says. "Putting them together is what I do."

Every project is different because he takes his style cues from diverse sources: a client's dream, a particular work of art, a textile, a souvenir from a trip abroad—or a 1930s Hollywood film (especially those by Busby Berkeley). Most of his clients are creative types—movie stars, fashion designers, art dealers, and collectors—and some have employed him over decades for multiple projects, probably due to his highly personal approach.

For 15 years Gillette maintained a design office with partner Stephen Shadley, another successful artist-turned-decorator. "I think some collectors hired us thinking we, as artists, would know how to deal with their works of art, would know how to take our cues from their works and give them a cohesive unity," Gillette says. But they were all too successful. When the business got too big and the workload too stressful, Gillette took a sabbatical. Then, two decades ago, he established Richard Gillette Designs, a small shop with a hands-on philosophy.

Why? He likes to collaborate.

"It's never 'my way or the highway'; everyone I've worked with soon finds that there is a give-and-take with our relationship,'" he says. "I try

to focus on who the client is and what the environment is longing for," he says. "We don't always agree at first. I tell clients, 'This is what you are looking for. This is what I am thinking. How can we come to a common ground?"

He brings art reference materials with him to client meetings to illustrate his ideas. "Like any relationship, communication is the key to success." Notably, in the age of instant messaging, he insists on progressing slowly. "There is a common misconception that a project can be done in a matter of days, from concept to final reveal," he says. "My way of working can be challenging because it's so personal; the term 'organic process' sums it up the best." It is also time-consuming. He relishes commissioning custom cabinetry, upholstered pieces, window treatments and light fixtures. "This is not something you can do quickly," he says.

He employs a wide variety of artisans: bronze workers, carpenters, glassmakers, etcetera. "I like to break down the distinction between decorative art and fine art," he says. "And I like to keep craftsmen of every type busy."

His approach is well illustrated by a New York apartment he decorated for a Middle Eastern woman clothing executive who collects vintage textiles and costumes. In a vast loft (p. 162) he purposely carved out an intimate lounge by creating walls made from antique glass doors from Syria. Inspired by Leon Bakst's exotic 1910 set design for the ballet Scheherazade, he installed these doors with lacey Arabesques in carved wood, and then furnished the room with luxurious over-scaled green mohair banquettes and silvered low tables from India. He painted Moorish motifs and repetitive tile patterns that he had seen in Iran, Turkey, and Spain on a mural for the ceiling. Now it is covered with "faux tiles" in geometric patters of green, turquoise, orange, and black. "I took work from the Alhambra in Spain, mosques, and Topkapi Palace, so the ceiling would not resemble a given place," he says. The late Italian decorator Renzo Mongiardino would have loved it.

The piece-de-resistance is a mural covering the lounge's entire back wall. Gillette photographed his client's vintage embroidered black bolero jacket and had one small fragment enlarged 400%. He then papered the wall with the blow-up of the stitches, but now they look like rope. Finally, he proceeded to enhance the "stitches" by rubbing metallic powders on top to "give some glimmer and glamour and shimmer."

This is like couture decorating, Gillette says. "The piece was fitted specifically to the contours of the apartment. That's what true couture means."

Some of his interiors resemble stage sets, purposefully so. One way Gillette produces "theater" is through the use of a single, unexpected, bold stroke. One client, a Hollywood actress famous for her wit and quirky style, lived in a 1940s house in Sneden's Landing on the Hudson River north of Manhattan (p. 98). The house had a "great room" paneled in dark mahogany, even on the cathedral ceiling. Gillette bravely painted the entire space (ceiling, walls, and floor) in bright white, partly to show off the client's vintage Paul Frankl upholstered pieces. "We went to resources in a number of cities in search of chunky furniture to use as sculptural objects—as in a De Chirico landscape throwing off any consistent sense of scale," he says. Then came the genius moment. Gillette found and installed a pair of chandeliers, mid-century commercial fix-



tures, that were over four feet in circumference. Each had 140 porcupine-like spokes with lights at the tips. They hang from the ceiling "like star bursts" he says. The fixtures are the exclamation points in the stage set.

Another client bought the piano nobile in a magnificent 1918 Horace Trumbauer Beaux Arts townhouse in Carnegie Hill in Manhattan (p. 170). With its original walnut paneling and eighteen-foot ceilings, the living room resembled a Louis XVI salon in a French chateau, complete with gilt bronze sconces. But it was also charm free, more like a mens club. Enter Gillette, stage left. The client wanted to retain the wood walls and carved detailing, and Gillette agreed that the room's formality called for Neoclassical furniture. But how to make the place look like a twenty-first century project? Gillette designed a custom carpet 40 feet long and 24 feet wide with a Bauhaus grid and bright Leger colors: bright blue, green, yellow and an orange red, on gray. "I generated the design on a computer and had it woven in Nepal," he said. Then he painted the ceiling bright blue, added two contemporary hyper-realist contemporary paintings and, voila, he managed to eliminate the stiffness of the architecture. In the dining room next door, Gillette provided scenic murals since "the room has no views of its own." One wall depicts the dancing water fountains at the Chateau of Versailles. The wall opposite has an Italian landscape with tall cypresses, a bit like a painting by John Singer Sargent.

"This will be your garden," Gillette told the client. "These will be your views."

Ever inventive, he had found the images on line and had them scanned on to canvas panels scaled to the elevation of the vast dining room. The real fun came after the canvases were mounted, much like wallpaper, on the walls. "I painted over every surface for three weeks," he recalls. "The pixilated images looked too modern, so I covered them with translucent layers of paint and metallic powders—not to obliterate the pictures but to enhance them."

For the dining room's viewless window he designed lush full-length curtains "just like you would have on a stage," he says. Behind them, he replaced the glass in the French doors and put in a grid of colored, leaded glass in pale greens, yellows, and blues in what he calls a "Mondrian pattern."

"I had just been to Tahiti," he says. "My idea was, when the curtains were open, you would see water and sky. What the room is supposed to conjure up is romance—and put people in a cheerful mood."

Like professional set designers—and he has done a few theater sets—Gillette is obsessed with the manipulation of light. He often applies silver and gold leaf to ceilings and beams.

"How do you embellish something?" he asks rhetorically. "You use the techniques people have employed since ancient times: gilding and silvering."

Gillette is fascinated by anything that reflects light: the mother-of-pearl inlay in a chest from Damascus, mirrored furniture, lacquered anything. For translucent effects, he plays with shoji screens, curtains made of gossamer metallic fabrics, and hand-marbleized silk, and any number of iterations in glass: colored, frosted, leaded, rippled or patterned. He often suggests ebonizing floors for effect, "so the furniture appears to dance on the surface, like people on a Busby Berkeley set," he says.

For a traditional 1918 home in downtown Charleston, S.C. (p. 70), he produced a mélange of classical "influences," quite different from anything else he had done but appropriate for the setting. Furnishings included a Federal convex mirror, an alabaster and bronze Greco-Roman ceiling fixture, and window cornices boasting motifs taken from ancient Pompeian wall paintings. Floors are decorated with Adamesque painted medallions. He calls the house his "American Piranesi," after the eighteenth-century Italian architect who tutored Adam.

This kind of decorating, with such a vast range of references, cannot be duplicated, which is why this book is worth studying—and is long overdue.



