


# SHOWCASE OF INTERIOR DESIGN™



Forty-Three Designers  
and Their Work

Midwest Edition



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and Their Work  
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Grand Rapids, MI

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*A personal  
journey through  
the world of interior  
design.*



By Mary Jane Pool

My appreciation of wizards of the interior began when I was a child. Mother always had Mr. Folsom to get things done, to make rooms pretty and comfortable. He knew where to find the right Kiva rug, the perfect Pembroke table, the deliciously faded blue and white blocked linen for curtains. My father once dreamed we painted the living room raspberry red with white moldings, and so we did. It was wonderful for years.

When I arrived at *Vogue* Magazine in the mid 1940's, right out of college, Joseph Platt had just redesigned the reception room in pale woods and slim, tailored upholstery typical of that period. There were still some signs of the earlier Elsie de Wolf decoration. The office of Edna Woolman Chase, the editor-in-chief, was a vision of delicate color, with small scale French furniture and a charming crystal chandelier. In the 1960's designer Billy Baldwin was called in to bring the reception room up to date. He covered the Platt sofas in a cotton printed in apple green and white, scattered around lots of basket chairs, enough for lunch parties and large seminars. As the room was circled with windows and opened onto terraces it was like a garden in the sky and a surprise and delight for all who came to see us. The meetings there were always a success.

*It was like a  
garden in the  
sky and a  
surprise and  
delight for all  
who came to  
see us.*

*I gathered,  
and treasure,  
ideas from  
each of them.*

While I was living through the fast change of fashion in the office, things were moving slower at home, but definitely moving. My collecting started with early American pine, then the fascination for things French caught me. The pine was replaced with Louis XVI bergeres painted almond green, and honeyed fruitwood dining chairs with leopard velvet seats. Just as mother sent on to me some of grandmother's Chinese porcelain I met interior designer John Rieck. We worked beautifully together. A black and red lacquered table was added. A tiny hallway was papered with colorful Chinese garden scenes printed on a glossy black background. A collection of ginger jars was mounted on black lacquered brackets over a black glass mantel. My personal journey through the world of interior design had started and with a talented designer who has since become one of my best friends.

John went on to design two offices for me. The first, at *Vogue*, was a white shell—walls, ceiling, floor. The desk was a slim, black Parsons table. The sofa and armless chairs, left over from Joseph Platt days, were upholstered in awning-striped canvas in black and white. When I was sent upstairs to *House & Garden* it seemed fitting to choose a *House & Garden* color for my



new office, so John enveloped me in Mercury Grey. The walls, the ceiling, the carpeted floor, the large table desk and credenzas were all Mercury Grey. The Joseph Platt chairs, brought upstairs from *Vogue*, were recovered in a textured grey wool. A mirrored screen added sparkle, bamboo roll shades and a stack of giant baskets from Columbia added a touch of nature. It was as serene as it sounds and very conducive to work.

**I**t was my good fortune to meet many interior designers during my years as an editor of *Vogue* and editor-in-chief of *House & Garden*. Like the rolling stone I gathered, and treasure, ideas from each of them. For instance, from Billy Baldwin I learned the importance of decorating around the things you love, and about the joy of moveable furniture. He said: "After a party see how the guests have moved the chairs together for conversation and leave them that way." From Michael Taylor I learned about the utter luxury of big scale furniture, objects, plants, trees, and the allure of nature's colors and textures. From Bruce Gregga I learned about floating a few pieces of beautiful furniture in light and space. From Francois Catroux I learned about the enlivening effect of glass, mirror, and metal used deftly in a room of antiques. From David Hicks I learned about the "pow" of a patterned floor and the real glory of an

*"After a party  
see how the  
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moved the chairs  
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conversation  
and leave them  
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*Working  
with a designer  
of experience  
and taste is  
exhilarating.*

all red room. Happily, I am still learning, keeping a sharp look around me wherever I go, and devouring the design publications with a hungry eye.

Just as I was retiring from my magazine life, I moved into one of New York's handsomest old buildings. The apartment had twelve foot ceilings, heroic acanthus leaf cornices, dark herringbone floors. John Rieck had retired, too (much too young), so I asked designer Richard V. Hare to help me adapt to this glorious new space. As we stood in the living room in a golden glow—the yellow walls had already been sponged and antiqued—I felt the atmosphere called for something more exuberant than I had ever had before. I casually mentioned I had always wanted some Italian silver-leaf chairs. Richard was quick to say he had just seen a set of four in Olivieri's window. And, so my collection of painted Venetian furniture began. Each of the twenty-five pieces assembled during the last nine years entertains me, like any piece of art should. It is always more satisfying to collect a furniture style than simply to buy what is needed.

I have just moved to a smaller apartment, but with a plus: a view of

Central Park. The decoration is much the same—a yellow living room with dark herringbone floors, a study in antiqued, persimmon lacquer, a bedroom with Chinese garden scenes in pale colors. The entrance hall will be striated a hint of pink with satin white moldings. Richard Hare, a genius with color, will be there with his painter as he mixes just the right shade. His workrooms are adapting the curtains to the new windows—the yellow silk taffeta for the living room, the persimmon linen velvet for the study, and the lavender cotton taffeta for the bedroom. His carpenter has rearranged the closets to suit my needs, added book shelves in the study, toe moldings and crown moldings in strategic places, and is preparing two sets of French doors with mirrored panes that will open and close these small spaces with some style. Richard will supervise the placement of the furniture, the pictures, and the objects so that they function well and look their best. And, he will always be on call for future additions, or subtractions, and changes-of-mind that mean progress.

**I**t is a good partnership. Working with a designer of experience and taste is exhilarating. It is a time of learning and growing. And, consulting with a professional can save you from making costly mistakes. The big reward is that it is always a joy to be at home.

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Editor's Note:

Mary Jane Pool, an editor of *Vogue* Magazine and editor-in-chief of *House & Garden* 1970-1980, is a consultant to the Baker Furniture Company and Aves Advertising, Inc. She edited *Billy Baldwin Decorates* and *20th Century Decorating, Architecture and Gardens*. She is co-author of *The Angel Tree*, a book about the 18th Century Creche Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and *The Gardens of Venice* to be published by Rizzoli this year. She serves on several boards including the Decorative Arts Trust and The Isabel O'Neil Foundation for the Art of the Painted Finish.

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