

NEW AMERICAN LUXURY

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PROFESSIONAL

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“WHAT ALLOWS US TO MAINTAIN STABILITY IS **VERSATILITY.**”

CHARLOTTE BARNES, AS TOLD TO ANNIE FISCHER



The first thing I always ask is how my client uses the space. Do they walk past this living room or do they use it? Do they like to entertain? Are there special pieces that are important to them? What allows us to maintain stability is versatility. Our ability to turn our clients' inspirations into reality unifies and identifies us as a brand. Whether a secondary residence in Florida, a farm in the English countryside, or a modern city apartment, my approach always begins with building a collection around what the client already loves. Some clients have unlimited resources, and some need to make less seem like more. I believe there is no reason you can't have something special that is also within budget. Taking an intense period of time at the beginning of each project to understand the client and the space makes for exponentially better results. Once I have a good sense of those needs, we prepare the furniture plans. Then we get to shop. I like each space to reflect and radiate a certain mood or personality—an interior must stand the test of time, but not look as if the decorator just left.

ABOUT CHARLOTTE BARNES / Charlotte Barnes began her career working for Ralph Lauren Womenswear Co. in New York, then lived and worked in London for several years. Soon after returning to the United States, she founded Charlotte Barnes Interior Design & Decoration LLC. She has worked nationally and internationally since, including projects in England, Spain, Colorado, New York, East Hampton, Greenwich, Nantucket, Watch Hill, Martha's Vineyard, and Florida. Barnes typically takes on four large, full-service projects and six smaller-scale projects per year. She also operates a studio in Greenwich, Connecticut, which serves as a gallery space for her custom-

PHOTOGRAPHY: TONY WOODS. STYLING: JESSICA T. SMITH. © 2012
one of Barnes's favorite designs.
At the center of the room is an
old farmhouse table surrounded
by leather chairs from The Shop
(theshopnewyork.com), above
which hangs a chandelier
from Sentimento/BK Antiques
(bkantiques.com). Along the
wall is an old Swedish hutch
filled with an assortment of
pottery, porcelain, and toils,
and an Old English barrel
chair with Robert Kime fabric
(robertkime.com).



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Any project is about the mixture. There is a quiet, understated luxury in my work. Comfort is key. With my upholstered furniture line, I work painstakingly to get the perfect pitch on a traditional-looking piece. For my studio, I go to BK Antiques in New York—we've had a wonderful relationship for years—and choose things I love that work in conjunction with what I've found on my own, through key dealers, auctions, or in travels. At the moment we have a gorgeous eight-foot-tall 18th century mirror next to an upholstered Deco chair. There's a French stainless-steel coffee table with an old farmhouse bench behind it. I buy old and new (antique to modern furniture, contemporary art and accessories),

but never reproductions. I would rather wait and find something great than just fill a space.

I firmly believe no one can do anything alone. A team of fabulously talented people surrounds me both in my office and outside of it. Over the years, I have built and maintained invaluable relationships in this industry. I am lucky to work with artisans who are just as meticulous as I am, willing to spend days and weeks perfecting a frame size or the best pleat for a curtain. I've used the same wallpaper installer since I started. I believe in loyalty. When I'm in a pinch, those people are there for me—and this business has a lot of pinches!

Patience, too, is enormously impor

When you're hired to make decisions for projects that are sometimes monumentally expensive decisions, everyone has to trust and respect the team. Last year, for example, we were designing a secondary residence in Palm Beach, Florida, and we must have tried 30 different samples of color before we found the perfect shade. I'm a general contractor on that project. Wood Inc., was efficient and so calm. Truly some of the most professional builders I've ever worked with. If you take your time at the beginning of a project, perfecting each and every detail, this includes building the "team"—your team will exceed even your own expectations. ●