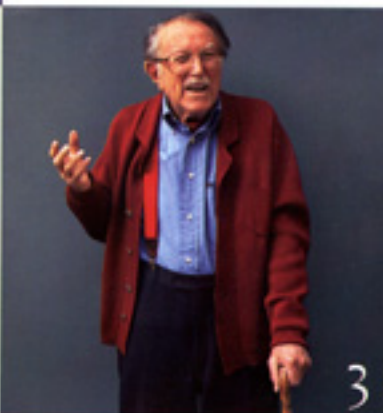


GIANTS OF DESIGN

House Beautiful

AMERICAN STYLE NOW: COLORFUL, CLASSIC, RELAXED JUNE 2006



A portrait of Bunny Williams, an interior designer, with short, layered blonde hair. She is wearing a white t-shirt under a dark, open jacket. Her hands are clasped in front of her, and she is wearing a watch on her left wrist and a bracelet on her right. The background is a solid, muted blue.

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Bunny Williams interior designer
“I want to be at home more than anyplace else. I feel
sorry for people who are always trying to run away.”

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HENRY LEUTWYLER



Bunny Williams in her Manhattan conference room.



Many a designer can pick a pretty chintz. Many a designer believes in restraint and appropriateness. What, then, makes Bunny Williams a Giant among them? She seems to have spent her entire lifetime getting ready. There was her genial Virginia childhood, her studying to be a painter, her 22 years with the firm Parish-Hadley Associates, her 18 years as the principal of her own highly successful firm. But more than anything there is her conviction that a house and its garden should be one. Fifteen years ago she opened Treillage, a garden ornament and furnishings shop on the notably gardenless island of Manhattan. "It was all about the indoor-outdoor thing," she says, "the idea that you can bring a rusty old garden bench into your front hall." Today we all do things like that, and Treillage has a thousand imitators; but let's not forget, it takes a Bunny Williams to lead the way.

I "I WANTED the 'Greek temple' folly in my Connecticut garden to feel as if the trees came out of the woods and made a building. . . . When I started my own garden, I realized that houses and gardens go hand in hand. One is part of the other, and that relationship is one of the first things I think about when I'm doing a house. I go into the living room and think, what am I going to look at when I look out the window? Where am I going to sit when I sit outside?"

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“MY GENERAL RULE IS, the bolder the scale, the more interesting the room. This huge stone-topped table could go out in the garden, but I decided to use it as a desk. The carved wooden lambs came from Mrs. Parish’s estate. Then there’s a beautiful ivory box, a little Wedgwood pitcher, an incredible French Aptware urn. What I really like is to have a lot of different things mixed together. In design, you want to take some of the past, bring it to the present, and think about the future. That’s when it becomes timeless. I’m always trying to capture that amazing warmth I felt growing up in a big family in Virginia, where Sunday lunch was often 20 people from 2 to 80 years old—with me falling asleep on my great-uncle’s bird dog. It was always about families and hospitality. I want to make whatever I do feel like that.”

“I ALWAYS FEEL humbled by nature. You put this little seed in a pot, and the next thing you know you have this amazing auricula blossoms with 500 colors that you couldn’t even begin to capture in a watercolor. So I find it very spiritual to sit in my conservatory in the middle of winter with the sun pouring down through the skylight and the room smelling of jasmine. I think nature creates atmosphere, in a way I could never do with objects. When the vines are growing and tangling over the doorway, there’s something kind of intoxicating about it.”

