

# TRADITIONAL HOME

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DESIGN AWARDS ISSUE



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CLIENT COMFORTS, SPLENDID VIEWS, AND A JOYFUL OUTLOOK INSPIRE THE WORK OF NEW YORK INTERIOR DESIGNER MATTHEW SMYTH. BY EVVIN McDONALD • PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL HOYT

# PLEASURE points

## DESIGN AWARDS

No wonder Matthew Patrick Smyth usually needed to handle only one such piece of paper that comes to his desk: he is working simultaneously on several New York apartments, a flat in London, a house in San Francisco, one in Jamaica, and another in Miami, the last for the same clients whose Long Island home features here. "Travel increases appreciation for creative solutions," he says, "and the more traveled my clients, the more sophisticated their taste in interior design." In fact, Smyth believes internationalism is the most important influence in his work these days, filling it with exciting challenges for expressing traditional style with unexpected turns and new elegance.

Mix and genius don't necessarily come in the same package, but both are apparent in Smyth's treatment of the house featured here. The octagonal living room, with its 24-foot ceiling and many doors and windows, presented numerous challenges in order to meet the needs of the owners.

Left: In the living room, Smyth kept the furniture profile low and continuous to counterbalance the vast ceiling height. The Anglo-Indian chairs facing an antique ottoman refer to the colonial architecture and style kicking back in front of the fireplace. More than a score of lanterns and lamps provide subtle lighting at night and in overall neutral balance. Although built in 1987, the house, designed by architect Eugene Fuchsman shortly before his death, evokes the work of St. Edwin Lutyens in the 1920s. Smyth recently added lattice to the ceiling, a touch that echoes window trim used throughout the house.



Repeating full-the-eye tricks to minimize the soaring architecture, Smyth instead established a low, contrasting baseline for the furnishings.

"They wanted the large space for entertaining," Smyth says, "as well as surfaces for spreading out newspapers and business documents. In order to humanize the space, to establish a feeling of intimacy, I used a mix of patterns. In a smaller room, they could have come across as busy, but here the ceilings and overall size balance everything out so that a dozen or so different subtle patterns and harmonious colors quietly blend, for a sense of warm familiarity."

Because Smyth's clients are international travelers, he thought it doubly appropriate with the colonial qualities of the house to combine typical Anglo-Indian furniture—a beaded edge table, for example—with English and some Continental pieces.

The weathered house, while built 30 years ago, reminded Smyth of something St. Edwin Lutyens might have done earlier in the century.

The blue-gray color of the fireplace's original English tiles with medallion motifs sets the tone of the living room. Old Egyptian photographs casually leaned against the chimney subtly connect to keeping the eye low and adding a sense of mystery rather than up into the ceiling vaulting. Behind the sofa, the early 20th-century Dutch-style leaf table with a painted (rather than stained) finish complements the other Dutch pieces.



a choice that could have been almost anywhere—the Hampton, the Pacific Northwest, England, South Africa, India. "I loved the wallflowers and textures and played off those influences in designing the interiors, such as keeping the chimney bricks and using more wood ceiling inspiration," he says.

Overlooking the front door, a view of the garden is framed by a screen in the lattice- and glass-enclosed porch. On departure, one walks directly toward this "porch." Views are all around it, hence, from every window, every door and level, through French doors that open up to the porches and garden level all the major rooms. "Because it is steel high on the property and looks down toward a lake," Smith says, "no blinds or draperies are needed for privacy. We used, only where necessary, some simple roll-up shades that can be lowered against two-inch sun. The flip side of this is that lighting at night and during the winter was essential to offset the starkness of the glass and to have the house remain to softly lit spaces."

The master bedroom is a study in the use of mixed, though clean, colors, chosen to generate a feeling of freshness and openness. A faded Tibetan rug on top of the wall-to-wall carpet breaks up the mass in the large room and makes it more interesting. "This also works best," Smith says, "if the wall-to-wall is a neutral pile, which sets off the smaller rug."

The guest room was inspired by a split given to the clients by the best man at their wedding 25 years earlier. The walls in

**Below:** The breakfast area has a hand-painted Italian ceramic top table and Queen Anne-style antique chairs with hand-painted areas that echo other places in the house.







**Right:** The master bedroom's four-poster, made in Italy, comes with a canopy which keeps chame not to use. Wood turnery is also featured in the good legend English stone at the base of the head in the legs of the short ebony table from India, and in the legs of the chair, which length designed. The early 20th-century American quilt, an antique brass Dutch oval basket, and a faded fabric rug on top of the neutral wall-to-wall give an easy together as if pairs. **Above:** The four-poster night mirror over the mantel has decorative flowers and fruit. The vase on a memory glass. **Below:** Unfinished pliers must subtle differences, by the same as through outcropping.



The master bath looks down to the lake, the tub's architecture is wood paneling like that used elsewhere in the house. The dramatic tree is one of the few things moved from the owner's previous residence. Smith's fondness for the shape and contour of objects is evident in the multi-colored Victorian chair's legs and polished back and in the Archaic perfume and bath oil containers of the tortoiseshell on the low angle-pole table. The rug is English-made.



pink, creamy yellow and all other colors in the room came from the quilt. Smith says this great room has everything he hopes for when he is a guest: "Lots of bookcases filled with new and old books and stacks of magazines. I like options in reading material, a place to sit, and a good reading light. This room has a writing table with chair and a generous window seat between the bookcases that is deep enough to put your legs out and nap comfortably." In keeping with the rest of the house, there is an Anglo-Indian chair next to the fireplace with an old chaise throne that replicates its grandly carved, seating area.

While not the owner's primary workspace, the house is used all year. "In order for the house to feel right in all seasons," Smith says, "we chose tables in gray blues, beige, muted reds, golds—a lot faded, perhaps, but never middle."

Considering Smith's profoundly thoughtfulness about his client's needs, it is hardly surprising that they have become friends. For this house, the wife and Smith had great fun shopping together. "Especially when accessories are concerned," he confesses. "I find it is usual policy to buy what you like when you see it even if you don't know exactly where it fits. Where major pieces are concerned, there is often a need to double-check practical matters such as dimensions."

"During the design process I keep in mind the dimensions or pleasure points within a room that will give satisfaction when seen, when experienced, and when recalled." ■

Regional Editor: Susana Marwan

For more information, see the Reader's Resource on page 138.

Below: The guest bedroom is planned around the quilt, a 25-year-old wedding gift. The Arts and Crafts years of the owner were chosen for their profile.

