



# INTERIOR DESIGN MASTER CLASS

100 LESSONS FROM AMERICA'S FINEST DESIGNERS ON THE ART OF DECORATION



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# Travel



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I have always loved to travel, but I first began to realize how important travel was for an interior designer while I was working for David Easton. David's knowledge of architectural history and the decorative arts is famously encyclopedic—and one of the primary reasons I wanted to work for him in the first place. He has a noteworthy library, but he believes passionately in seeing things firsthand. He's an avid, adventurous traveler.

When I started to explore the world as a young designer, my eye began to evolve in unexpected ways. My first trips to France, England, and Ireland were revelatory. From Gothic to medieval, from Renaissance to Reformation to Enlightenment, the human capacity for creating beauty as I then understood it (like so many young people, I actually thought I knew it well from books and photographs) became much more complex and rich through the face-to-facade encounter. It struck me then that for every designer, the Grand Tour—or any sort of tour, for that matter—is a necessity, not a luxury (though clearly it's that, too).

A formal design education gives us an academic familiarity with the continuum of styles and the essentials of architecture, interiors, and the decorative arts: the everyday tools of design that include proportion, scale, form, floor plans, ornament, materials, and color. To comprehend in any real way how we can transform them into rooms and homes that are greater than the sum of their parts, I think we need to see up close and personal how our predecessors around the world, legendary and anonymous alike, accomplished the same at the highest levels. For me, that has meant visiting historic sites, cities, landscapes, houses, and rooms to witness the extraordinary and ongoing tradition of design. The more I have seen and learned from experience and research, the more I have been able to offer my clients. A city, an architectural marvel, a remarkable work of

A tranquil neutral palette is offset by the rich brown velvet of the club chairs, the zebra-print carpeting, and the blue and coral throw pillows in this apartment on Manhattan's Park Avenue. A pair of haunting lithographs by Lin Tianmiao hang above the sofa.







art, a specific countryside: how can we know, really know, what it is without being there to experience it to the tips of our fingers?

As a designer, the learning never stops. After a career full of extensive travel, I finally went to Athens. As I stood and looked out at the Acropolis from my hotel room that first night—the Parthenon’s classical perfection was brilliantly lit in the moonlight—I asked myself why on earth I had waited so long to go there. Contemplating that heart-stopping view and anticipating the days of exploration ahead, it seemed so odd to me that I’d seen so much of the world but not yet experienced the real ground zero of Western design and culture. I love Paris, where boredom is out of the question. New York is my hometown, so I’ve experienced the city and its influence on design and culture my entire life. But Athens? To be in the city that gave us democracy, the classical orders and perfect forms that we designers continue to reinterpret to this day, the blueprints for drama and opera and politics and warfare, the evidence of a millennia of human activity everywhere around—a city that has itself been a crossroads of East and West, a city where the Byzantine and the eighteenth century exist side by side with the prehistoric and the twenty-first century—there’s no place quite like it. Whether or not you’re intrigued by today’s Athens, you should put it on your itinerary now.

When I create rooms and houses, I sometimes know precisely where the spark comes from for a particular detail. Other times, though, I don’t, although it feels right. That’s the essence of design. What I am aware of, however, is that my choices come from a collective memory of things I’ve seen and places I’ve experienced in person. Whether at home or overseas, travel is my ultimate source of inspiration.

A work by Pierre Marie Brisson hangs above a button-tufted sofa in this New York apartment and informs the room’s palette.

OPPOSITE Curios from travels on this bedside table include a Parisian clock, several tortoiseshell boxes, and an ivory elephant from India.

