

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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## The New AD100

TODAY'S GREATEST  
TALENTS IN  
ARCHITECTURE  
& DESIGN



# SENSE



In the living room of a Richmond, Virginia, home decorated by Bunny Williams, new pieces with a traditional air complement fine European antiques. The 18th-century English armchairs in the center of the room, upholstered in a Pollack fabric, were found at Florian Papp. The French Art Moderne armchairs and the 18th-century Venetian mirror are from Bernd Goeckler Antiques, as are the 19th-century French painted consoles flanking the fireplace. The sofa in the foreground is covered in a Lee Jofa woven silk, and the curtains are made of a Brunschwig & Fils silk taffeta. For details see Sources.

# & SENSIBILITY

At a handsome Georgian-style house in Richmond, Virginia, designer Bunny Williams marries stately Southern refinement and Continental élan

TEXT BY DAN SHAW PHOTOGRAPHY BY PIETER ESTERSOHN PRODUCED BY HOWARD CHRISTIAN





**A** few years ago, when newlyweds Helga and Floyd D. Gottwald Jr., of Richmond, Virginia, were searching for a decorator to create a backdrop for their new life together, a friend gave them a list of five designers, including Bunny Williams. “I had never heard of her,” recalls Helga. “I looked at her website and thought, Yes, yes, yes!” The couple went to New York to interview Williams, a native Virginian who has become one of the grande dames of the Manhattan decorating establishment. “We were immediately hooked,” says Helga, who was impressed by Williams’s warm, straightforward personality and her portfolio of antiques-filled homes.

But then the designer traveled down to Richmond to assess the Gottwalds’ low-slung 1950s dwelling. “Bunny was very pleasant and polite, but I could tell she

didn’t like the house at all,” she says. “A few weeks after meeting us, she called and said, ‘Helga, I’ve had an epiphany. You should knock the house down and build a new one.’” In fact, that had been Helga’s secret wish all along. “I would have been petrified to ask my husband to do that so early in our marriage,” she says. (It’s the second marriage for both.) Williams’s suggestion spurred her on, and, much to the owner’s delight, her husband consented right away.

Now, four years later, the Gottwalds are just settling into an 18,000-square-foot brick residence that melds their distinct aesthetic preferences. “She likes French and Italian furniture, and he likes English and American things,” says Williams, who mixed Colonial and Continental styles so their new household would have a sense of shared history.

Williams’s own history—and her passions for classical architecture, gardening, and the decorative arts—is well documented. Among her four books is the best-selling tome *An Affair With a House*, which chronicles how she turned

**Above, from left:** The Gottwalds—Floyd Jr. and Helga—in the entrance gallery of their new home. Williams worked closely with Richmond-based architectural firm 3north to design a house that references the Georgian period; the circa-1870 lead greyhounds are from John Rosselli Antiques. **Opposite:** The expansive great room includes a Paul Ferrante chandelier from Ainsworth-Noah, a pair of antique wrought-iron floor lamps from Remains Lighting, and a pair of club chairs covered in a Clarence House fabric with trim by Kelly Wearstler from Lee Jofa. The reading chair in the foreground is upholstered in a zebra-stripe velvet by Clarence House, and the carpet in the sitting area is from Darius Antique and Decorative Rugs.





a run-down 18th-century Greek Revival residence in rural Connecticut into her captivating weekend retreat, complete with a barn for entertaining, extensive gardens, and an Adirondack-style poolhouse modeled after a Greek temple. Having worked for 22 years at the legendary firm of Parish-Hadley before striking out on her own in the late '80s, Williams knows firsthand that certain American families—Astors, Paleys, Whitneys—tend to demand that their homes be as sophisticated as they are comfortable.

Both qualities appealed to the Gottwalds as well; accordingly, Williams collaborated closely with architect Jay Hugo of 3north, a Richmond-based firm, to design a residence that would be genteel and welcoming in every detail. “Mr. Gottwald is from an old Richmond family, and he was clear that this should be a classic house, a variation on the Georgian style,” says Williams, who had the furniture arrangements planned before construction began and weighed in on every

molding, doorway, and finish. “Bunny really helped raise the bar,” Hugo says. “She brought leadership to the project, and she understands how to create graciousness on a grand scale.”

Even in the home’s generously sized rooms, there is no excess. For instance, the capacious entrance hall—the crossbar of the H-shaped house, with a floating staircase at one end—has been designed with an eye to pleasing proportion. “You have to break up a large space to make it intimate, with big mirrors, big moldings, and big furniture,” Williams says. It was devised also as a gallery for Floyd’s collection of bronzes by Frederic Remington. Williams mounted the sculptures on simple white pedestals, and the Old West works stand in sharp relief against the walls, which were painted to resemble frescoes—a nod to Helga’s European heritage (she was born in Germany) and sensibility.

The foyer opens onto both the formal dining room and the living room, the latter served by an abundance of windows

**Above, from left:** Trompe l’oeil damask wall panels painted by Bob Christian Decorative Art grace the entry; the gilt-wood mirror from Florian Papp and the rococo console from Guy Regal are both 18th-century Italian, and the antique armchairs are covered in a Manuel Canovas linen. The Frederic Remington bronze at the window is one of several in the owners’ collection; the stair runner is by Beauvais. **Opposite, clockwise from top:** Hand-painted trellis wallpaper by Gracie lines the sunroom; the burled-walnut dining table is 19th century, the painted shell-back chairs are from John Rosselli Antiques, and the topiary at left is planted in an antique urn from Treillage. An American console from Karl Kemp Antiques. A view of the dining room.

