ELLE DECOR

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THE A-LIST: 30 DESIGNERS WE LOVE

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ELLE DECOR's A-LIST

Coming up with our first A-List of 25 interior designers wasn't easy. The editors of ELLE DECOR spent weeks sifting, sorting, discussing, and examining. We studied photographs, paged through back issues, and navigated websites. We argued—correction: make that conversed in lively fashion—late into the night. The goal was to produce a list of authentic tastemakers in the U.S. whose rooms reflect the passions of ELLE DECOR—high style, serious comfort, snappy ideas—and whose innovative approach to the art of decoration will be studied for generations. We've also included a shortlist of five up-and-coming interior designers we think are on their way to influencing the way you live, emerging talents you might not have heard of yet but whose intriguing spaces promise bright futures.

These lists are only the beginning, however. At elledecor.com you will soon find more information on each of these 30 in our new Designer Registry, as well as our selection of design's Grand Masters, those talents whose work is already so prominent and influential that their status is unquestioned.

Each year ELLE DECOR's A-List will grow richer and more diverse. Because if there's one thing we know, it's that design never stops getting better. So without further ado, welcome to our magazine's inaugural salute to America's best and brightest, from the long established to the rising stars. And if you think we've overlooked an inspiring designer or design team, let us know. On ELLE DECOR's A-List, there's always room for more. ▷

the A-list

A library in Bridgehampton.

< JEFFREY BILHUBER

Though the styles of his rooms range from sumptuously lush to strictly tailored, Bilhuber consistently offers an all-American take on classic decorating, one that emphasizes crisp execution, commonsense comforts, and brisk organization—which explains why he's considered the Billy Baldwin of the 21st century. Clients include Anna Wintour of *Vogue* and David Bowie. He's the author of *Jeffrey Bilhuber's Design Basics* (Rizzoli, 2003) and *Defining Luxury* (Rizzoli, 2008). *bilhuber.com*

Brandolini's Ma
tan living

^ MURIEL BRANDOLINI

Her watchwords: bohemian, provocative, edgy, idiosyncratic. This part-Vietnamese fashion stylist turned interior designer is famed for creating high-impact environments packed with major-league modern art and exotic hand-wrought details, from exuberant embroidered wall coverings, to funky built-ins lacquered to a mirror-bright sheen, to elegantly adorned matchstick blinds. She's also known for her offbeat colors, which range from dark and dreamy to acid-bright. *murielbrandolini.com*

Carter's living room in Virginia.

^ DARRYL CARTER

Based in Washington, D.C., this cerebral former lawyer turns out cool, calm, and collected spaces that are distinctive in their masculine rigor and minimal yet evocative atmospheres. They are full of smart neutral fabrics, dark-wood furniture with soulful patinas and strong silhouettes, and restrained accessories, often set against walls painted chalk-white to heighten the poetic effect. His rooms and his furniture designs are spare without being austere. In 2008 Carter published his first decorating guide, *The New Traditional* (Clarkson Potter). *darrylcarter.com*

A dining room in Florida.

^ ROBERT COUTURIER

The French-born interior designer's eccentric glamour delights high-profile folks such as best-dressed writer Amy Fine Collins, hairstylist and entrepreneur Frédéric Fekkai, and novelist Jay McInerney. The look? Often a major mix of the grand and the contemporary: Louis XVI commodes, cutting-edge modern lighting, flamboyant tapestries, knockout works of art, custom-made furniture with an Ottoman air, and dashes of Lesage embroidery. Imagine a seraglio by way of Schiaparelli. *robertcouturier.com*

Cohler's Upper East Side living room.

< ERIC COHLER

Juggling commissions that range in style from mod dramatic to relaxed rustic, Cohler has a unique high-low aesthetic and devises exciting but livable interiors full of color and layered with art and objects. Ancien-régime antiques are as likely to be a part of the package as a 1960s Lucite table, and a neutral palette is always enlivened with bright stripes, bold patterns, or surprising graphic accents. His rooms manage to be both unexpected and supremely comfortable. *ericcohler.com*

the A-list

A Beverly Hills bedroom.

∧ WALDO FERNANDEZ

A decorator to the stars—actress Elizabeth Taylor, producer Brett Ratner, and music impresario Russell Simmons among them—Los Angeles–based Fernandez traffics in a well-traveled, laid-back, and inviting style; a kind of low-key luxury that's not flashy but is immediately recognizable to the cognoscenti. Among his favorite elements are gutsy furnishings, beefy linen, natural woods, Windsor chairs, cowhide, woven-rush carpets, hefty braided baskets, and almost anything Danish Modern. The results are as easy as they are stylish. *waldosdesigns.com*

Gambrel's Manhattan living room.

∧ STEVEN GAMBREL

A classically trained architecture graduate of the University of Virginia, Gambrel creates rooms that run the gamut from soigné country to high-gloss urbane. A daring colorist, he's unafraid to use bright pinks, emerald-greens, deep grays, and cerulean blues. Pieces wrought in shimmering lacquer, tactile surfaces (supershiny or rugged matte), and conversation-starting antique and vintage furniture mingle with his own signature upholstered creations in rooms that evoke the panache of earlier eras while never ignoring the needs of modern-day life. *srgambrel.com*

A living room in Bridgehampton.

SUZANNE KASLER >

Echoes of history and strong doses of glamour are the Atlanta-based decorator's stock-in-trade—though she has an appreciation for funky mod Italian furniture as well. Her specialty is rooms that broadcast Euro chic crossed with Southern charm and ease, where gilt-wood antiques are energized by contemporary art and concentrated bursts of sharp color. She is the author of *Suzanne Kasler: Inspired Interiors* (Rizzoli, 2009). *suzannekasler.com*

Kasler's Atlanta family ro

∧ VICTORIA HAGAN

Known for restrained and refined rooms with cerebral atmospheres and strong architectural foundations, Hagan merges traditional aesthetics with the requirements of modern living. Her crisp, uncluttered designs are not only visually appealing, her many clients—who include Revlon chairman Ron Perelman and comedian Conan O'Brien—find them supremely peaceful. Her first book, *Victoria Hagan: Interior Portraits*, will be published by Rizzoli in October 2010. *victoriahagan.com*

Moss's screened porch in East Hampton.

< CHARLOTTE MOSS

Elegance, sophistication, and classicism are the touchstones of this Virginia-born designer and her thoroughbred style. Her livable glamour is inspired by English, European, and American traditions, channeling those iconic influences into a wide range of expressions—country-manor pretty, cozy chalet, Anglo-American suave—whose common denominators are comfort and suitability. Her new book, *Charlotte Moss Decorates* (Rizzoli), will be published next spring. *charlottemoss.com*

the A-list

A Manhattan dining room.

^ JOE NAHEM

A creator of restrained and elegant rooms with a modern attitude, Nahem is a master at using sculptural vintage furnishings (French designers of the 1940s and George Nakashima are favorites, as are more quirky, colorful pieces by Karl Springer and Verner Panton), which he mixes with custom-made items, glittering accessories, and bold contemporary artworks. The results are dynamic and quietly dramatic rooms—highly textured spaces where history meets the future. *foxnahemdesign.com*

Papachristidis's New York City dining area.

< ALEX PAPACHRISTIDIS

A Papachristidis room is eclectic, pure, and not so simple. He is best known for cheerful, pretty, multilayered interiors inspired by the Old World, packed with colors, patterns, objects, and art that could have been assembled over generations. Some projects have been more soothing, however, such as an apartment that looks to the soigné glories of midcentury Paris. What he never neglects is a touch of glamour. *alexpapachristidis.com*

MILES REDD >

An ebullient Georgia native, Redd blends high-style history with bold colors and patterns—painted floors, exuberantly papered walls—that put a cheeky spin on tradition. Often inspired by the saucy élan of American design in the 1930s, his cocktail-ready interiors sparkle, shimmer, shine, and seduce. Redd is also creative director of Oscar de la Renta Home. *milesredd.com*

A music room in Chelsea.

O'Brien's study in Manhattan.

^ THOMAS O'BRIEN

An influential product designer as well as a tastemaking interior decorator, O'Brien has a look that's instantly identifiable—warmly modern rooms where furniture and accessories (some antique, some made yesterday) mingle with rare and surprising objects that could have come from a cabinet of curiosities. What's consistent are his use of luxurious materials and quiet colors. He is the author of *American Modern* (Abrams, 2010). *aerostudios.com*

An Upper East Side bedroom.

^ KATIE RIDDER

The former shelter-magazine editor is strikingly adept at merging exotic references (from Morocco, Turkey, the Middle East) with unusually patterned wallpaper and fabrics. She also creates upholstered furniture with sprightly silhouettes, such as headboards sculpted into romantic arches. The results are cheerful and worldly boho-chic spaces saturated with color, whimsy, and couture touches. *katieridder.com*

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A living room in Miami.

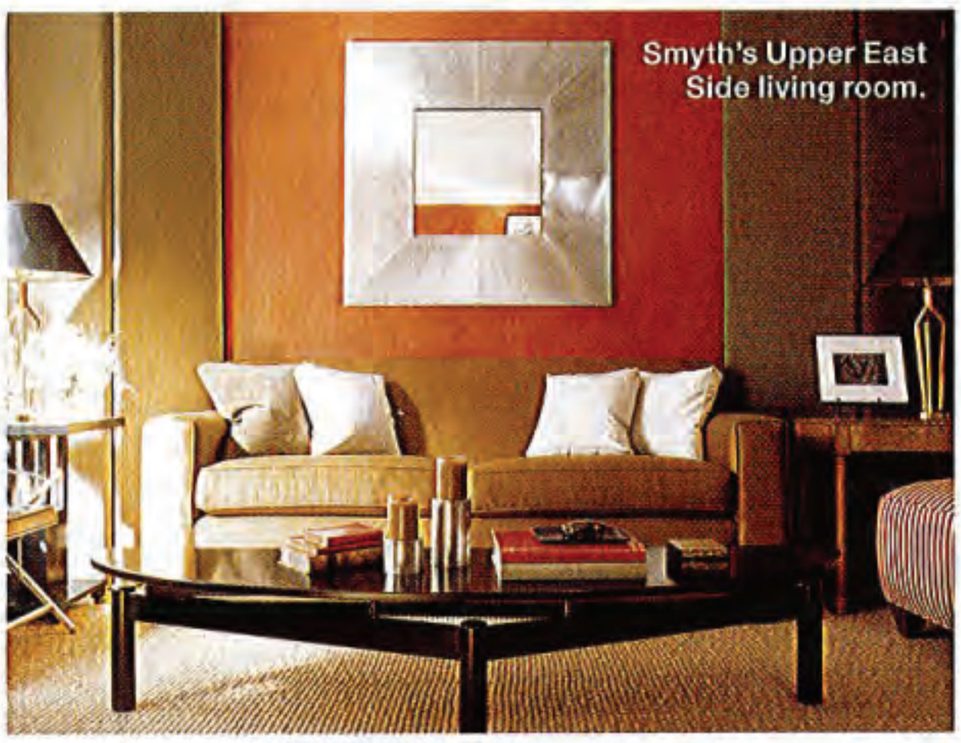
< STEPHEN SILLS

A connoisseur and collector who has an eye for objects with impressive provenance, Sills has long been a top-flight talent with equally renowned clients—Vera Wang, Tina Turner, Nicolas Berggruen, the Connaught and St. Regis hotels. The look? Serene and sophisticated, history energized with a dollop of swagger. He's also known for his subdued color palettes, rich fabrics, jaw-dropping modern art, and striking finishes, such as combed-plaster walls. *stephensills.com*

A bedroom in Malibu.

^ MICHAEL S. SMITH

The tastemaker for the private quarters of the Obama White House, L.A.–based Smith counts Cindy Crawford and Sir Evelyn de Rothschild among the admirers of his posh-trad vocabulary of contemporary art, deluxe antiques, cozy upholstery, and romantic fabrics inspired by English chintzes and Indian cottons. His style is knockout but never over-the-top. His books *Elements of Style* and *Houses* (Rizzoli, 2005 and '08) are must-haves. *michaelsmithinc.com*


Smyth's Upper East Side living room.

^ MATTHEW PATRICK SMYTH

Friendly, restrained, exquisitely appointed rooms have been Smyth's forte for more than two decades. It's all about quiet style with legs, a classically inspired but always lively mix of traditional furniture, up-to-the-minute upholstery, and luxe fabrics that run the gamut from graphic ethnic prints to Savile Row–style wools and cashmeres. His international experience has made him equally adept at Continental flair and the American vernacular; what unites his disparate rooms is subtle drama and an appreciation for quality. *matthewpatricksmyth.com*

A Manhattan living room.

^ WILLIAM SOFIELD

As might be expected from the creator of more than 400 boutiques for Gucci, New York's Soho Grand Hotel, and swank furniture for Baker, Sofield crafts spaces that are almost decadent in their interplay of materials, history, and mood. The Princeton-trained architect-designer has a luxurious, worldly aesthetic that spans from rigorous haute-industrial allure to theatrical pan-Asian refinement. Though he considers himself a modernist, his work often nods to 1930s Hollywood glamour and features hand-wrought finishes and custom pieces that celebrate the artisan. *studiosofield.com*

Stilin's living room in East Hampton.

< ROBERT STILIN

Carefully edited, serenely contemporary settings that invite laid-back living are the strong suit of this East Hampton, New York–based designer. His fuss-free projects are finely tailored and warmly textured, incorporating clean-cut fabrics, strong-lined vintage, antique, and modern furniture (he has a penchant for 1950s French pieces and their straightforward silhouettes), dark metal, natural woods, and grandly scaled art with a compelling graphic presence. *robertstilin.com*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PIETER ESTERSOHN; SIMON

the A-list

A living room in Beverly Hills.

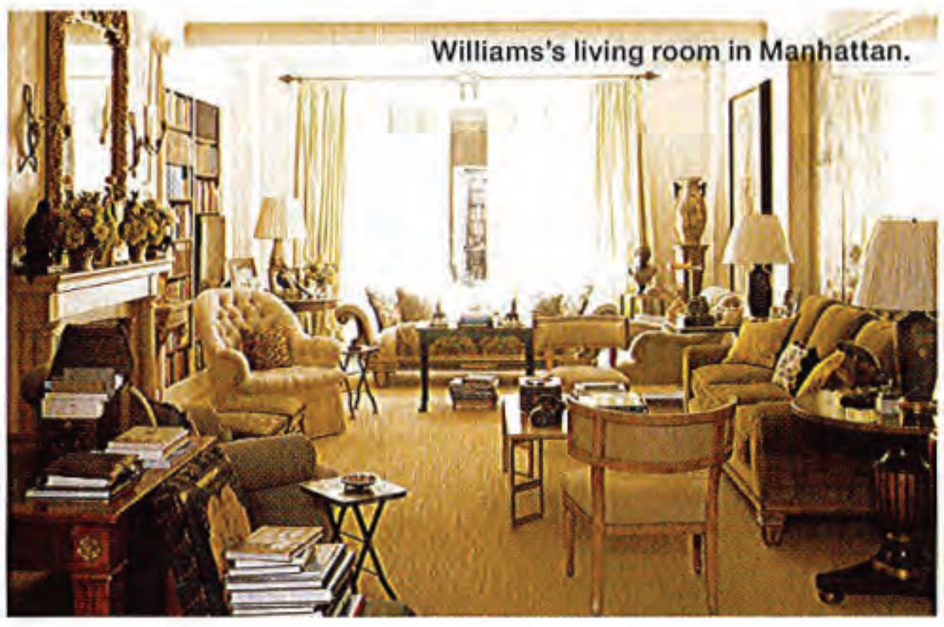
∧ MADELINE STUART

Funky, classic, elegant—Stuart produces them all, imbuing her work with romance, history, and a sense of expansive ease. The interiors of the L.A.–based designer can be appropriately dramatic or restrained depending on whether she's designing a Georgian manse or a sleek contemporary beach house. Stuart has conjured an Indian-Raj paradise inside a Spanish Colonial envelope and made a Wyoming chalet ruggedly modern. Whatever their style, her rooms usually feature a compelling mix of antiques and bespoke pieces. *madelinestuart.com*

Volpe's Paris living room.

∧ STEVEN VOLPE

Thanks to his appreciation for both ancien-régime antiques and the latest Marcel Wanders provocation—and sometimes pairing them in one space—Volpe's interiors range from lusciously palatial homages to the past to edgy exercises in modern living. The San Francisco–based designer was strongly influenced by his years in Paris and is known for a spare sensibility that never forgoes luxury or richness, juxtaposing strong colors with refined detailing, modern works of art, and subtle doses of glamour and shine. *stevenvolpe.com*



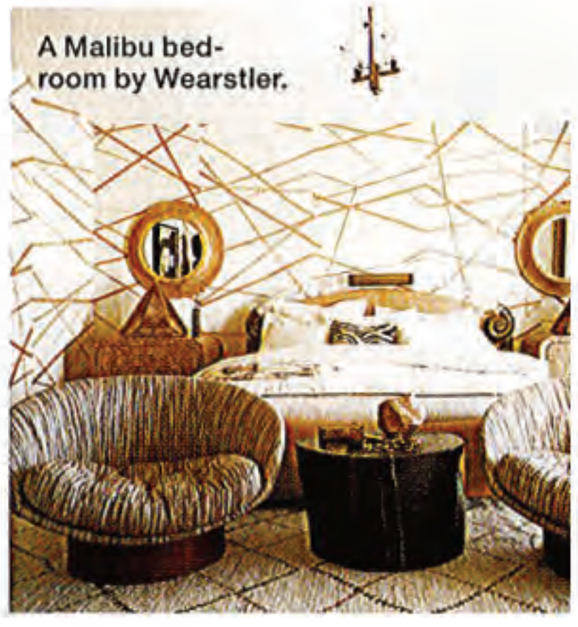
Williams's living room in Manhattan.

∧ BUNNY WILLIAMS

Trained at the renowned Parish-Hadley Assoc., Williams is the undisputed doyenne of aristo-American decorating as well as a garden-design aficionado. For her, it's all about classic comfort, an informed eye, and a bit of fun. In her rooms, fine European antiques meet mirrored walls and gutsy artwork. She uses intense colors and delicate patterns with equal panache. Her most recent book is *Bunny Williams' Point of View* (Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 2007). *bunnywilliams.com*

KELLY WEARSTLER >

No other designer's work can be mistaken for Wearstler's fanciful wild-child interiors, which, in addition to private homes, include such influential hotels as the Viceroy Santa Monica and the Tides South Beach and the BG Restaurant at Bergdorf Goodman in Manhattan. Brash, graphic, theatrical, and skillfully layered, her rooms blend echoes of everything from 1970s funk to '40s Hollywood into head-spinning, high-energy chic. Her most recent book is *Hue* (Ammo Books, 2009). *kwid.com*



A Malibu bedroom by Wearstler.

A Manhattan living area.

< VICENTE WOLF

A designer who is also an admired photographer and style blogger, the Cuba-born Wolf brings a focused approach to his interiors, conjuring airy, modern-minded spaces ready for their close-up. Many of the finest have a global-glam attitude, featuring blue-chip 20th-century furniture icons, a sprinkling of baroque antiques, Asian elements, and ethnographic treasures. He is the author of three books, including the forthcoming *Lifting the Curtain on Design* (The Monacelli Press, 2010). *vicentewolf.com*

5 Designers to Watch

You may not have heard of them yet, but these five young talents are already creating rooms that are superstylish—and distinctively their own

A living room in Connecticut.

∧ JESSE CARRIER

Working with his wife, Mara Miller, Carrier has cornered the market on clean, sunny interiors with an emphasis on warm, wide-ranging elements: bentwood pieces by Thonet, Robsjohn-Gibbings chairs, Robert Kime print fabrics. Clients include designer Jason Wu and editor Anna Wintour (her office and *Vogue*'s lobby). *carrierandcompany.com*

A California dining room.

∧ MARIE TURNER

Part of the bicoastal mother-and-two-daughters firm M. Elle Design, Turner trained at Christie's and with David Collins in London, giving her a strong background in Continental style. Her serene rooms are dappled with discreet pops of color, Hollywood Regency accents, and intriguing custom-made furniture. *melledesign.com*

An Upper West Side living room.

∧ KATIE LYDON

Modern, sassy, and occasionally retro, the interiors of British-born Katie Lydon have a coolly contemporary vibe—though she enriches their crispness with antiques (an 18th-century French chest of drawers, a 19th-century Chinese chair), vintage pieces by blue-chip names, and striking modern art. *katielydon.com*

A living room in San Francisco.

< GRANT K. GIBSON

A San Francisco–based decorator and style blogger, Gibson outfits rooms with approachable, engaging style, whether the impact is Francophile flash (gilt-wood mirrors, Louis XVI chairs) or tawny masculinity (neoclassical furnishings, zebra-skin rugs). His work is always eclectic, livable, and easy on the eyes. *grantkgibson.com*

Furth's Los Angeles living room.

< OLIVER M. FURTH

This Los Angeles–based decorator is thoroughly grounded in classical traditions, though he approaches them with aristo irreverence and West Coast optimism. Furth's inviting interiors go from suave and swank to colorful and cheeky, and often include reclaimed materials. *olivermfurth.com*

PHOTO: JOHN VALIANT. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SIMON UPTON; © KATIE LYDON INC.