

*Alexa Hampton: The Language of Interior Design*  
(Clarkson Potter), \$50

# review.

DESIGN ROYALTY ALEXA HAMPTON USES HER OWN PORTFOLIO TO OUTLINE THE BASICS OF A SUCCESSFUL INTERIOR, WHILE AESTHETE EXTRAORDINAIRE THOMAS JAYNE CONTINUES HIS QUEST TO DEFINE AMERICAN STYLE.

## STYLE SELECTION

Hampton based this design, part of her ongoing collection for Hickory Chair, on an antique from her own home. *Ash Cocktail Table*, price available to the trade; [hickorychair.com](http://hickorychair.com)



Vignettes zoom in on Hampton's materials choices, like this largely yellow palette that builds dimension with prints.



**ALEXA HAMPTON**  
Alexa Hampton, Inc.  
Mark Hampton, LLC

## WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO PUBLISH THIS BOOK?

I think secretly that I'm a little bit old-fashioned and that there are rules. Interior design can't just be a gut experience. You have to have information about the world, the language and the history of design.

## WHICH OF THE ROOMS IS YOUR FAVORITE?

My apartment is in there ["Classically Composed"], and I now have three children under the age of 4. So I love that project because I look back at it wistfully, like, 'Oh, that's when my living room was beautiful.' Now it's primary-colored hell.

## WHAT DO YOU WANT READERS TO TAKE AWAY FROM THE BOOK?

If you think that there's a huge mystery about design, it can enfeeble you. But, if you think, 'Contrast is the verb in the room; it keeps the eye moving around. Color is the adjective; it makes it powerful or weak,' then it helps you express your own design.

## WHAT IS YOUR TOP DECORATING TIP?

Trust your sense of color. Everyone is born with a palette. Do not allow yourself to be swayed by anybody.

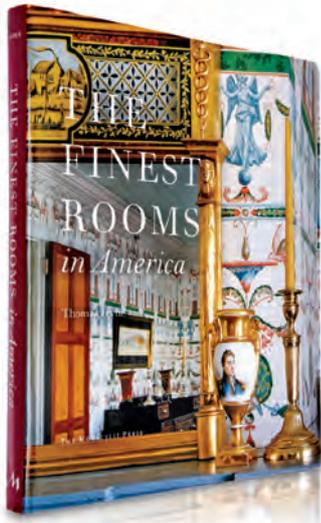
## HOW DO YOU DEFINE LUXURY?

I think luxury is best defined as something that suits you. It's not what it costs or how rare it is. It's a total luxury to have what you want.



This neoclassical mansion in New Orleans—included in the "Color" chapter of her book—is near and dear to Hampton because she decorated it prior to Hurricane Katrina and had to painstakingly redo the entire ground floor afterward.

REVIEW



*The Finest Rooms in America*  
(The Monacelli Press), \$50

*“Americans are internationally known for making sportswear: Things that are attractive but are well-crafted and wearable. I think American decoration is largely parallel to that.”*



**THOMAS JAYNE**  
Thomas Jayne Studio, Inc.



David Kleinberg’s bespoke living room in this Tribeca loft is one of 50 spaces Jayne selected for his new book.

**STYLE SELECTION**

Describing this carpet as organic, modern and traditional, Jayne says it sets the tone for his upcoming Stark collection. *Chrysanthemum*, price available to the trade; starkcarpet.com



**WHAT COMPELLED YOU TO PUT THIS BOOK TOGETHER?**

Pretty early, I started collecting books on interior decoration, and one of them was this volume published in 1964 called *The Finest Rooms*. So I always had the title in mind, and I suggested that it was time for another version of that book. ... I think it’s going to cause a little controversy because it’s such a subjective list. Even my editor looked at me and said, ‘You’re not going to include *that*, are you? You’re nuts!’

**WHAT DID YOU ENJOY ABOUT IT?**

I was looking at things as a scholar and a decorator. I enjoyed that parity. And it was hard but rewarding to try to verbalize those things.

**WHAT’S THE COMMON THREAD AMONG THESE ROOMS?**

A fine room is basically the thought and intelligence rather than material expense. Anyone can have a fine room if they meditate on it. I think that’s inspirational.

**SO EVEN DISPARATE ROOMS HAVE THE SAME BOTTOM LINE?**

For example, the first room is Thomas Jefferson’s tea room, which is a very personal space, and the last room is Albert Hadley’s sitting room, which is quite informal. They have equal intensity, and there’s an architecture behind both rooms that supports their lives.

**HOW HAS AMERICAN STYLE EVOLVED?**

There’s been a distancing from formality. In early days, people had rooms that were for ceremony as much as for living. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, those went out of style.

**WHAT IS AMERICAN STYLE?**

There’s not one thing that’s American, but there are several things that cumulatively form something American. The lack of an aristocracy and the more informal lifestyle—and our very global view in terms of what we put into our houses and how we make them work for us—helps define what is American.



Jayne restored the Diamond A. Ranch, an 1860s structure in New Mexico, with respect for both its colorful history and its contemporary owners, resulting in a mélange of American styles.