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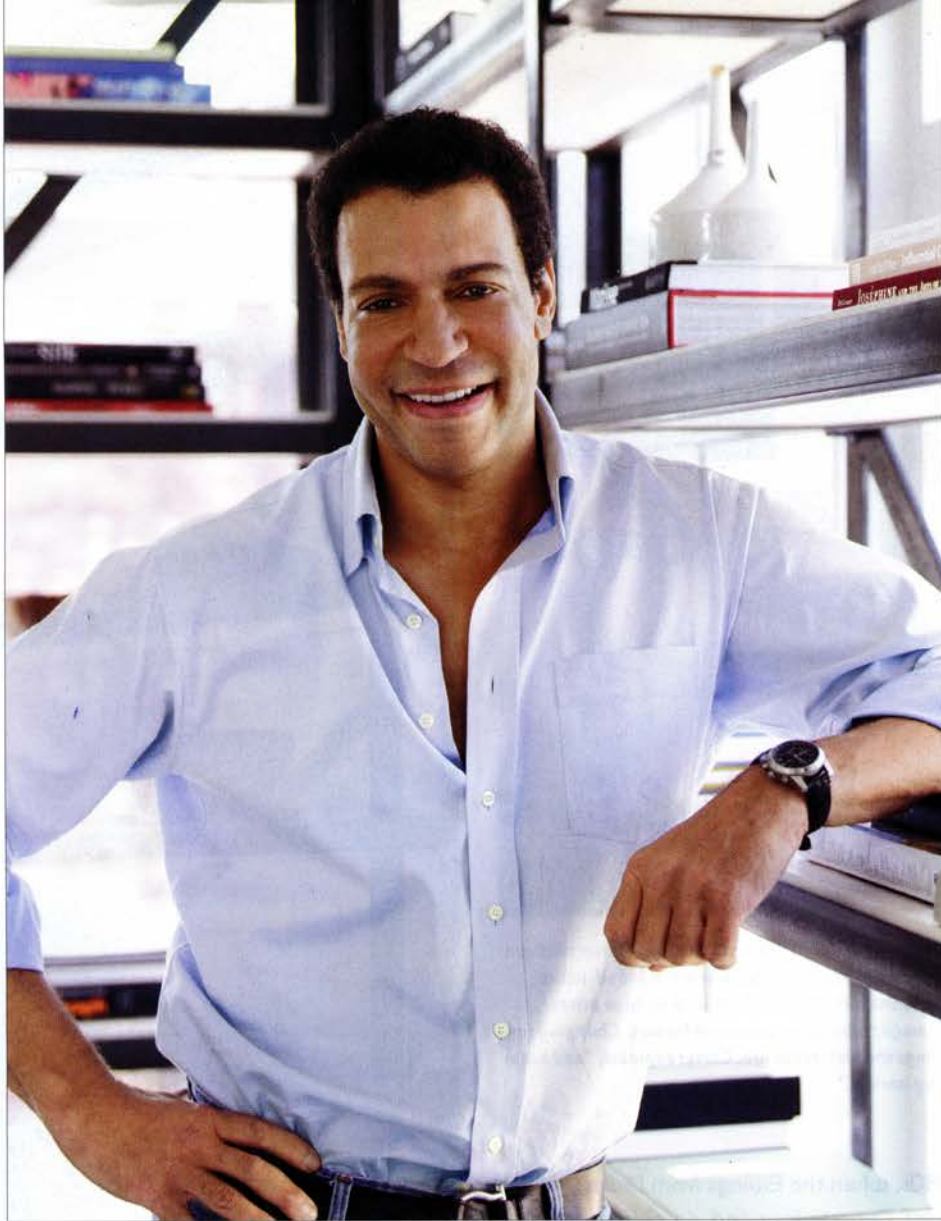
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Old + New

How to Make It Work

Darryl Carter, a modernist who draws inspiration from classic antiques, shares his tricks for using neutral ground to achieve harmony across the ages.

GROOMING: BRYAN LYNDE FOR R.J. BENNETT REPRESENTS.

BY MELINDA PAGE • PHOTOGRAPHS BY LUCAS ALLEN • PRODUCED BY NATALIE WARADY



Larson-Juhl's White Collection frames turn snapshots into high art. Carter designed this Modern Baroque lamp for Thomasville.

- **Unify a collection by limiting the palette.** To prevent the visual clutter that can come with a wall of random family photos, Carter made black-and-white photocopies of color snapshots and interspersed them with vintage prints. Then he surrounded all the images with white mats and frames. Changing up the widths of the borders brings the pictures to life, Carter explains, "and keeps black and white from looking boring."

Back in the 1980s, when the Ewings from *Dallas* and the Carringtons of *Dynasty* lounged on chintz-covered divans in a facsimile of high-society formality, traditionalism ruled our tasseled, ruffled homes. Then, as the age of excess drew to a close, the country's collective style turned toward modernism, and rooms filled up with Saarinen tables and Eames chairs. Out went the plaid taffeta drapes; in came the beige linen shades. And now? Well, that whole midcentury vibe is beginning to feel a bit dated (again). Suddenly, the rich patina of a 19th-century Empire dresser seems cool—rebellious, even—especially when liberated from its usual stiff environs.

"By combining the warmth of antiques with the serenity of minimalism, you can create something entirely unique," says Washington, D.C.-based interior designer Darryl Carter. "I don't think people should be forced into rigid (continued on p.100)

"Why have a formal dining room or guest room just because that's what the layout calls for?"



Ralph Lauren
TACKROOM
WHITE WW10

- **Mute a vibrant rug by flipping it over.** A bright carpet in a room full of neutrals steals the show—and robs the space of its peacefulness. The underside of woven carpets, like this antique Persian from Galerie Shabab, often resembles faint watercolors.

• **Give a dining room another raison d'être.** A handsome, double-pedestal table recalls a university library—and encourages a variety of uses. The vast surface can accommodate reading and research, dinner for 12, or a spread of hors d'oeuvres.

• **Curtains aren't the only way to dress a window.** Carter wanted to add architectural interest to the room without fighting the expanse of plate glass. So he commissioned artists Margaret Booser and Joseph Wills to build floor-to-ceiling bookcases that sit in front of the windows. Sparingly stacked, the shelves don't obstruct the view.

• **Tap into the warmth of table lamps.** This candelabra-style lighting creates a far more inviting atmosphere than an overhead chandelier. To hide the power supply, Carter smartly ran the electric cords through holes drilled in the tabletop.

• **Typical dining chairs lack the appeal of soft, multipurpose seating.** More comfortable than their stiff wooden counterparts, enveloping wing chairs and a plush ottoman loosely surround the table.

• **Shield a light-filled space from sun damage.** Remote-controlled roller shades from Budget Blinds can be lowered to protect prized possessions from sunlight, and then raised to enjoy the city skyline at night.

COLOR LESSON #5

Just because two things are neutral doesn't necessarily mean that they'll match.

Carter recommends taking a trial-and-error approach to incorporating different hues—put items side by side to see how they look. The designer established this room's cozy formality with a mohair-covered Cisco Brothers ottoman, plus a table, lamps, and chairs from his Thomasville line. The art books are from Amazon.com.





"The kitchen is all about utility, and you have to honor that," says Carter, who accessorized with an espresso maker from Crate & Barrel, NDI fabric tulips, and a white pitcher from The Conran Shop.

• **Consider alternatives to white porch paint.** The designer wanted the natural grain of the oak floor to show through, so he used Minwax's water-based wood stain in *Winter White*, instead of an opaque paint. "Coating the floors with the same light almond cast as the walls," Carter adds, "frames both contemporary and antique pieces harmoniously."

"I don't think people should be forced into rigid modern or traditional boxes."

(continued from p.98) modern or traditional boxes." Clearly, Carter's onto something. His book, *The New Traditional*, was among the top three interior-decorating titles on Amazon.com for months after its August release. And last April, Carter launched a 131-piece furniture collection for Thomasville; an expansion of the line is already in the works.

To get inside the process behind his genre-defying style, *O at Home* gave the designer a modern Manhattan apartment and asked him to outfit the space from floor to ceiling. Explaining exactly how he pulled it off was part of the job. Color, Carter says, is the most crucial aspect of his vision: Whites and creams unite furniture from different eras and preserve an airy minimalism. "A neutral background creates visual harmony," he explains, "allowing you to add interest through variations in woods, textures, and scales." In the apartment, that (continued on p.102)

• **Space-hogging hinged doors can't compete with sliding ones.** Ungainly doors shrink narrow spaces immeasurably; mount them on a track, though, and they blend right into the wall. "A sliding door maintains the clean lines and the original geometry of the hallway," Carter says, "but you can still close off the kitchen."

• **A room does not require four walls.** Using just two pieces of furniture, Carter carved an office out of a tiny entryway. Imposing items, like this tall Thomasville secretary Carter designed, work best in places where the view beyond is bright and uncluttered.

• **Treat a foyer as a sneak peek of the decor to come.** A modernist floor lamp paired with an antique Fauteuil de Bureau chair hint at the old/new mix. The lighting choice isn't just an aesthetic move; it eliminates the need for a table lamp—an awkward option for a drop-leaf desk.

• **Varying wood finishes can take the place of pattern.** When the surroundings are kept neutral, you can get away with incorporating different woods. Carter makes the most of the natural contrasts among a rough-hewn antique trough, a maple-colored frame, a mahogany-toned secretary, and an ebonized chair.

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COLOR LESSON #6

Open up a small space by creating continuity between walls and floors.

A floor lamp by Hinson Lighting illuminates a secretary filled with vintage books from Paula Rubenstein Ltd. and a mottled terra-cotta bowl by Uttermost. The antique trough in the hallway is from ABC Carpet & Home.

• **Juxtapose styles to play up each one.** “When everything matches, things start to feel static,” says Carter. But by placing a baroque Thomasville mirror on top of a modern frameless version, the designer highlights the beauty of both.



Alabaster canisters by Labrazel and an assortment of Fresh cosmetics line the sink in the bathroom. The towels are Royal Velvet.

(continued from p.100) meant ivory walls and floors, and ecru cotton and tan burlap upholstery, along with a variety of leathers. The shades of wood range from ebony to mahogany to maple. Woven rattan and glazed terra-cotta add even more interest.

The resulting design goes much deeper than furniture and finishes—Carter tweaked the floor plan, too. “Why have a formal dining room or guest room just because that’s what the layout calls for?” he asks. Instead, the dining room has become a library that works equally well for reading or entertaining. Carter also reimagined the second bedroom as a salon, in which the “sofa” is actually a daybed that can accommodate an overnight guest. “I never trained as a designer,” he explains, “which means I’m a lot less prone to following the so-called rules.”



• **Minimal art leads to maximum effect.** Carter finds that walls covered with art tend to announce themselves and obscure everything else. To keep the focus on furnishings, play with the surprise of hanging a petite silhouette above an oversize headboard.

COLOR LESSON #7

Add variety to a limited palette by incorporating different textures.

The bed gets an extra-luxurious boost from silk Ankasa shams, cotton Royal Velvet sheets, velvet linen Pottery Barn cushion covers, and a jute bedcover from Ochre; an Artemide lamp encourages nighttime reading. Carter’s embellished Thomasville desk is paired with a swivel chair from Rosewood Antiques.

• **Add architectural detail—with a bed.**
In bedrooms that lack crown moldings, the simplest way to establish character—and a dramatic focal point—is with a commanding four-poster bed, like this Carter design for Thomasville.

• **Two rugs offer more interest than one.**
“Layering carpets of the same hue on top of each other creates dimensionality and warmth,” Carter says. To achieve this effect, he placed a free-form cowhide rug atop a white wool Stark carpet.

