

# Classic CONTEMPORARY

**Lili Hart's mix of  
old and new creates  
modern spaces with an  
authentic feel.**

**By Samantha Myers**

Clients come to New York-based interior designer Lili Hart for a multitude of reasons. Perhaps it's her fresh approach to a classic style; her cozy, comfortable interiors; her utilization of fine art; or maybe it's her expertise in mixing contemporary with a style of the past. While the face of Hart's interiors may read as contemporary, it's the classic details that stand as the backbone to her designs — the antique features, the glimmer of history — and it is this knowledge and appreciation for the past that began her interest in interior design in the first place.

"My parents' idea of a great afternoon was antiquing," says Hart, who grew up in a classic American home. "I spent a lot of time around antique furniture — they had a great collection and that's what initially got me interested." When Hart finished college, she talked her parents into buying her a 1905 Victorian fixer-upper, which she proceeded to work on for several years. "That exposed me to so much. I did most of it myself, so I learned a lot. Then I went back east and enrolled in the New York School of Interior Design."

Hart's interior design experience flourished when she began working for renowned designer



PHOTO © CHUCK BAKER



PHOTO © ANNIE WATT

Lili Hart



On 5th Avenue in New York City, Hart's design of this apartment exudes Southern living in Manhattan, with an emphasis on soft color and subtle patterns.



In New York City's Tribeca, Hart designed a fashionable loft for a downtown family who loves color.

PHOTO ©CHUCK BAKER

Jeffrey Bilhuber right out of school, with whom she worked for five years before starting her own firm in 2007 — Liliane Hart Interiors. From Bilhuber, Hart learned how to manage large-scale projects scattered across the country, and how to mix the high with the low. “Clients don’t necessarily want to spend millions of dollars on things. Jeffrey is a master of having beautiful pieces in the room and mixing really simple things that aren’t expensive. He embraced all the furniture or items that clients wanted to use; he worked well with the things that they brought, whether it was a wonderful piece or not.”

Whatever Hart’s clients’ reasons may be for coming to her, she aims to give them all positive design experiences and beautiful interiors that express their personalities and styles. “For me, the clients’ needs come first. Whatever their requirements are in a project, that is the jumping off point for us. Because if they’re not happy, we’re not happy. And that’s where we get our initial inspiration, and when we begin to infuse our own taste, style and design around them.”

In addition to finding inspiration from her clients, she and her team also study the past. “We look at historic houses. We look at different wood trim techniques such as wainscoting. There’s a nice quality of things that look older, or authentic, that my clients really respond to.”

In a recent side project, Hart worked with an architect to build and design a classic Victorian Shingle-style home in Martha’s Vineyard, from start to finish. “The original house was there,” says Hart. “We knocked it down and built it from scratch. But no one assumes that from entering the home.” Like Hart’s style, the home stayed true to the past, with a fresh, contemporary facelift. Meeting her client’s admiration of vintage bathroom pieces, Hart embarked on a labor

of love to find, source and install bathroom components from the 1900s — a difficult, if not impossible task. “All the bathrooms, including the fixtures and sconces, were from the early 1900s. We amazingly found this artist, a master plumber, who put them all together and installed them.”

Hart’s favorite room in a home to design is the den, library, or an evening room. “I find that those rooms are usually very cozy or intimate. Clients use them more privately. I like to create a little jewel box — dark and relaxing, with mood lighting and a little shimmer. Something really special.”

This year, Hart participated in the Traditional Home 2016 Hampton Designer Showhouse in Bridgehampton, Long Island. Given just several weeks, Hart was asked to design the master bath, which she covered in a “watercolor, large gingham-patterned” Eskayel wallpaper and featured a soaking tub and terry cloth chair, intending to create a “sanctuary of ethereal colors.”

“What I’m told most about my style is that I have a good sense of color and an ability to layer color and a pattern in a soft, but subtle way — I think that’s what people like most about my designs,”

says Hart. Although continuously looking into the past for inspiration, Hart is not afraid to look forward. “Collaborating with clients and working with different styles is exciting for me. I definitely see growth in our future.” **UH**



Hart crafted this bright master bath for the Traditional Home 2016 Hampton Designer Showhouse.

PHOTO ©MARCO RICCA