

MASTER CLASS

CARLETON VARNEY

He calls himself “Mr. Color.” And after nearly 50 years at the helm of Dorothy Draper & Co., he’s still inspiring us to go bolder and brighter.

Interview by SHAX RIEGLER

COLOR IS THE GREATEST decorating tool, but people fear it. Mrs. Draper used to walk around the office and say, ‘Show me no gravy.’ It was her mantra—nothing gray and beige and boring. I still believe that.

AMERICAN BAROQUE HAS real glamour. Just one piece can make a room, so we partnered with Kindel to remake Draper designs like this mirror, inspired by a Greenbrier clock.



A BED SHOULD BE MORE than a mattress and box spring—you should have a headboard. Your bedding doesn’t have to all match—dress it like you dress yourself. Don’t lay your pillows flat. And *always* make your bed.

BEDSIDE LAMPS NEVER GIVE enough light. This one, from the Vermont Country Store, slips right over a headboard. It’s attractive, and I really can read by it.



HANGING PICTURES IS an art. Don’t start on the wall. Decide where you’ll put them first. I lay things out on a table or the floor and play with the arrangement until it feels right.



ABOVE: “I’m about pretty,” says Varney, who believes “there is no good or bad taste, just taste. And I believe that the very first room you remember is the origin of your taste.” He painted all the rooms in his Palm Beach house blue: “I like to react to the environment, and I’m right on the water. Using one color

throughout makes a space feel more expansive.” He added touches of red to liven up the living room, which is furnished with several Draper designs, including the coffee table and curio cabinet. “Scent is important in an interior, too,” he says. Here, he uses Orange Blossom Grove from his new fragrance collection.

‘**LAYERING FABRICS**’—that’s the current chic term for something decorators have been doing all along. Using a mix is one of the best ways to keep a space from being monotonous. (Varney fabrics at right: Rhododendron in White, Cane in Blue, and Alexandria in Green.)



A CHANGE OF COLOR CAN make a room feel new. The Presidential Parlor at the Greenbrier was mint green, and I refreshed the palette with cantaloupe melon, which felt right for today. It glows in the day and is flattering at night.



MY EVERYDAY CHINA IS Fiesta ware. The colors are wonderful—my favorites are the orange and green.



WHEN A DECORATOR FIRST comes to your home to see what you have—before he starts redecorating—and tells you to get rid of everything, I suggest you get rid of the decorator!



VIDEOS

WHEN YOU SEE THIS ICON, SCAN THE QUOTE TO HEAR FROM THE DESIGNER

8 **When framing artwork that requires a mat, specify a mat with 8-ply thickness—the increased depth of the resulting bevel can make anything look important.**
MADELINE STUART

13 **A BED SHOULD BE 23" OFF THE FLOOR, NO HIGHER.**
KATIE RIDDER

18 Always use white linens and towels. Never cross the line—always use white. They're bleachable and they send a message of cleanliness, refinement, and order.
MYRA HOEFER

1 **Start your living room furniture plan with the best seat in the room and work from there.**
DD ALLEN

9 Don't hang a mirror between windows. The spatial void it creates distracts from the view. And don't fall prey to using mirrors in every room or over every mantel. Mirrors are not art, and a room needs art.
CAREY MALONEY

14 **I love to use paper-backed linen on bedroom walls. In cream or pale yellow, it gives a softness that paint can't match.**
LIBBY CAMERON

19 **Never use a sconce over a mirror in the bathroom—it will cast unflattering shadows across the face. Sconces that flank the mirror will give a more realistic and flattering light.**
ROB SOUTHERN

2 To give rooms architectural detail when they don't have any, paint a 1½" to 2" lining stripe around the ceiling and up the walls in the corners. It's a rich touch, a way to get a lot of look with just paint.
MARSHALL WATSON

101 Designer SECRETS

Interviews by LISA CREGAN

20 **KEEP A MINIMUM OF 15" BETWEEN COFFEE TABLES AND SOFAS.**
ALEXA HAMPTON

3 While looking at one of my first New York apartments, David Hicks told me diplomatically, 'Dear boy, if you're going to paint the walls white, you need art.'
PETER DUNHAM

21 I recommend a height of 36" for a bathroom vanity instead of the standard 30". It's much more ergonomic and more comfortable all around.
JASON BELL

4 **THE HANG-UP—WHERE TO HANG MY ARTWORK? I'VE FOUND THAT 63" ON CENTER ABOVE THE FLOOR IS A PERFECT VIEWING HEIGHT FOR MOST PIECES.**
HUNTER KAISER

22 **Instead of a towel bar, mount 5 robe hooks 68" high for towels and robes.**
ROBERT STILIN

5 When you're hanging a series of pictures together, keep the gap between them 2" to 2½" to really utilize the wall space, and keep a minimum of 9" between the art and tops of sofas and chairs.
MILLY DE CABROL

10 The perfect amount of space between a mirror and the top of a mantel is 7".
J. RANDALL POWERS

15 **A bench at the foot of the bed should be no less than 2" shorter than the mattress width.**
TOBI FAIRLEY

23 **WHEN IT COMES TO BOOKCASES, STICK TO BOOKS. NOTHING IS MORE VISUALLY CHAOTIC THAN 46 SHELVES OF 'RANDOM 'STUFF.'**
J. RANDALL POWERS

6 **3M COMMAND STRIPS ARE FANTASTIC TO USE WHEN HANGING ART OVER MIRRORS, MILLWORK PANELS, OR VINTAGE WALLCOVERING.**
JAMES DOLENC

11 The ideal height to hang your flat-screen TV is at eye level when you're in viewing position. The ideal viewing distance is 1½ times the size of your flat screen.
JEAN LARETTE

16 **Do not, DO NOT use colored sheers in your home—particularly those that are pea green.**
CARLETON VARNEY

24 I like to use velvet on sofas and chairs because it's so comfortable. But only low-pile velvet. If you put plush velvet on them, you'll see the shadow of a person's behind when they get up. Big mistake!
SUSAN FERRIER

7 **If you have a painting that looks too small above your sofa, don't center it. Offset it a few inches to the left. The negative space—called 'ma'—becomes part of the image.**
RICHARD MISHAAN

12 Float something in the room—a sofa, a lounge chair—to avoid the 'dance hall' look. Think of it as an opportunity to show off the back (do something with the back).
BRAD WEESNER

17 Stop at 6 pillows on a bed. You need 2 soft extra-long pillows, 2 European squares, and, if you want, you can do 2 more European squares. But those Pekingese-size small pillows all over the bed are vulgar. And you have so much to throw on the floor when you get into bed.
DAVID NETTO

25 **A good paint formula for ceilings is the trim color plus 50% white.**
ALLISON CACCOMA