



Setting the Stage: Charles Pavarini III



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From classic to modern, Americana to European, [Charles Pavarini III](#) creates dramatic spaces reminiscent of the theater but made for today's living.

How did you become interested in interior design? Who were your mentors in the early days?

I had a career in theater as a performer and set designer. I had just come-off a tour with Ann Miller across country and decided that I would prefer going into design, realizing it could be an extension of the family business.

My grandfather was my first mentor, and his company, Pavarini Construction, built a lot of major buildings in NYC such as the United Nations Plaza, Lincoln Center, 5 wings on the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Seagram Tower, and 666 5th Avenue, to name a few.

Mesmerized by the scale and significance of his work but even more enchanted by the possibility of designing interiors in such grand spaces, I enrolled in the New York School of Interior Design. From there, I developed a strong bond with the work of Ruben de Saavedra, ASID and was later hired as his assistant after receiving the Bronze Medal of Achievement following my thesis.



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What do you do, or where do you go, for inspiration?

To my Lakeside, New England Cottage. A true Boathouse, the 1920's Victorian home made of boulders and embellished with Palladian architectural details succumbs my inner spirit with its peaceful, pictorial setting and spring-fed lake. Here I truly feel relaxed, taking-in all the inspiration nature provides to stimulate my creativity and zest for living.



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What do you consider to be the most significant design innovation of the last 10 years?

LED interior lighting. It has allowed us to bring changing color and illumination to an interior with neither the heat nor the need to re-lamp the fixtures. LED's can be used near fabrics and within cornices in ways not possible in the 20th century. I utilized Philips ColorKinetics in a residential bedroom I designed for Kips Bay 2006 (above) and proved how revolutionary the product is within the residential interior. I was able to locate it within an extremely shallow ceiling cove and behind an upholstered wall and headboard in ways never done before.



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What do you feel are lasting, timeless palettes that still feel fresh and up-to-the-minute?

Neutral palettes. Look at the work of Sally Sirkin Lewis. Perfect example. Her work has a consistently contemporary look that never has an overwhelming color scheme to reference time or trend.

Neutral palettes welcome art and sculpture, giving great liberty for the designer to augment a palette with accessories and art to create a timeless look.

Great art will always stand the test of time for its limited quantity and particular genius.



Which comes first: lifestyle or product/design? Is it lifestyle that has generated the design changes, or is design the driving force that affects how we live?

Design is certainly the driving force that affects how we live, and the elevation of lifestyle has certainly influenced product design over the years. The more we see, the more advanced it becomes over time; the more designers like myself design product in response to newly-discovered needs, forms and trends. Some of my greatest inspiration for design has come from travel and personal experiences in different places at varying levels of lifestyle. As designers and tastemakers become more savvy and more traveled, product design and interior design elevates along with it.



Is the trend in green design a fad or is it here to stay? Are clients requesting you to utilize eco-friendly or sustainable products in your design?

Green design is here to stay. At this time, we are experiencing a birth of environmental consciousness and action on planet earth... a form of environmental revolution of sorts. From now on, Green Design will become more and more a part of how we live and design as new methods, materials and techniques develop in the next era. It's less that clients are asking me to utilize them and more that I am presenting and advocating using them. I see myself as an educator and therefore obligated to share my knowledge and support of Green products and materials to make for a safer and healthier tomorrow.



Why do you think a well chosen paint color is critical to the success of a room design? What are the top 3 factors you take into consideration when choosing a paint color?

A well-chosen paint color can make or break a room design. Subtle nuances in color can easily drive a design in one direction or another.

For example, take a pale green. If it's too 'minty' the effect can be terribly weak and look like a poorly chosen pastel. On the other hand, if it's too yellow, it can look sickening and almost unnaturally bright. Very often, when painting an entire room, it's necessary to 'push' the color in one direction or another for successful results as reflected light coming-in from windows can completely turn a scheme which looks good on paper. The top 3 factors I take into consideration when choosing a paint color are as follows:

- 1) Lightness-to darkness:** Is the color too soft and will it look 'pink' or 'peach'. I am careful to select a more saturated color when striving for impact
- 2) Neutrality:** Often if a color is not neutralized enough, it can give overly bright an unnatural casts when painted on a wall or ceiling, especially if it has hints of green, orange, or yellow. Many different colors will turn 'pinky' too and that can be devastating if it's not intended.
- 3) Natural Light:** What may look good in the studio could be completely affected by natural light changing all of the parameters. A good selection must look good in the scheme day and at night as well, when the room is artificially lit.



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What was your most challenging project and why?

By far my most challenging project was the Apthorp Restoration. My firm was commissioned to complete renovation plans for 19 apartments, as well as to redesign all of the public halls and foyers. The terracotta block construction and extensive decorative plaster-work made the spaces incredibly difficult to renovate, especially when it came to trying to add closets, storage areas, and central air-conditioning. In the early 20th' century when this building was built, there was no demand for walk-in closets and luxurious bathrooms. Trying to bring the standard of living up to the space requirements of today's 'luxury' level proved quite a challenge and required consultation with engineers every step of the way. To top it all, the collapse of the economy forced us to abandon many of the directions we had taken on the interior layouts due to new budget constraints. With so many complex entities from lighting to plaster ornamentation to complicated power and electrical plans, it became near impossible to integrate all that was designed given the new parameters. I am sure this problem has come-about in many remodeling projects throughout the world as a result of the depressed economy.





How have you repurposed an antique for a particular project?

A great example is the Victorian Bed and settee in the Master Bedroom of the house we designed in Vail, Colorado. The bed was a double-size, as all were in that period, and we converted it to a queen size to make it more comfortable for the couple sleeping in it. The settee had a typical period upholstery which we replaced with a patchwork quilt. The goal was to bring a more Americana feeling to the space and to integrate the pieces into a more comfortable yet equally charming ambience. The effect gave an extraordinarily cozy note to a rather spacious, tree-top room and succeeded in providing the homeowner with a very luxurious and livable Master Bedroom suite.



What are your 2010 design trend predictions?

I believe that “less is more” given the sentiment of Mies van der Rohe in the early 20th Century. Away with the clutter and on with carefully chosen antiques balanced with simple vignettes and ‘hits’ of color. Along with the ‘Green’ trend, we’ll see fewer of everything from furniture to books to accessories, and more color-punch in subtle ways for accent. Creative paint details and vintage pieces will become more and more common due to the low cost and high drama they provide, especially some of the better selections from the late 60’s into the 70’s and even, dare I say it, 1980’s! The difference in this era will be in how Spartan the backgrounds will compare with those of the past.