



april inspiration... cowabunga!! bonkers is back!!!

According to a recent article on Interior Design by the *NEW YORK TIMES*, British design is making a comeback, and in their words, "Bonkers aesthetic is back". English design has always been a slightly madcap combination of traditional styling and antiques set amidst bold color and sometimes wonkish fabric patterns. You know the look, the "just throw it in the mix, it will look as right as rain" style that the British do so well.

The British temperament, so down to earth and most times so very proper, takes a break when it comes to football and decorating, and who can blame them? After all, these are people who conquered the world, survived the Blitz and eat Vegemite. Paisley, floral chintz, geometric fabrics in colors dark, or bright - just bring it on!



The Charleston House - Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant.

On our own home front here in the US of A, our puritan DNA seems to have influenced our decorating. We American designers tend to be very thoughtful about our design, matching dye lots, making sure that the color balance of any given room is close to perfect and have trained our eyes to notice when a pair of candlesticks are 1/4" off kilter. Even when we stretch decorating edicts, we like to stick pretty much to the rules.

Our strive for perfection is hard to tamp down. Take a close look at what the late and much loved Dean of the English Country Decorating School, Mario Buatta, did to the British Country look. He took the style of British manor houses, added beautiful color, clean and fresh pattern and in his own thoughtful manner, arranged those Staffordshire Dogs on the mantel with perfect precision. The English Country Look never looked so good or fresh, or perfect- Yankee decorating at its best.

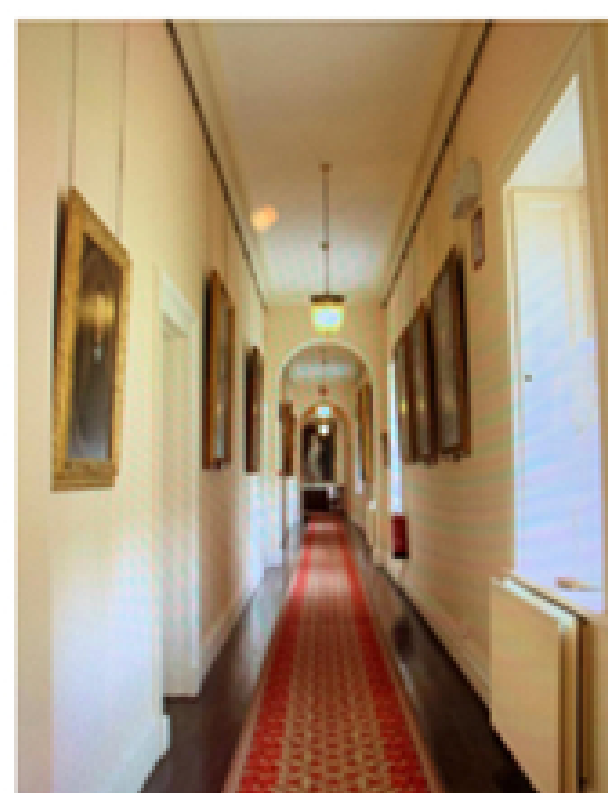


Mario Buatta's apartment

I traveled across the pond a few years ago with a group of women interior designers to tour English Country Houses. *Syon House*, in the west of London, is the jewel of the country house crown. Designed by Robert Adams in 1760, it is a neoclassical wonder and is still inhabited by the Duke of Northumberland and his family. Our tour was led by Lady Julia, the Duke's thoroughly modern, chipper, middle-aged sister. We toured room after room of public spaces as well as peeked into a few private rooms. Her tales of roller skating through long gallery halls, sliding down bannisters and chalking out hopscotch on floors made us realize that hallowed halls or not, these grand houses were and are still family homes.



Syon House



Family hallway in Syon House

Our tour ended in the family living room. Surrounded by personal photographs (all in silver frames of course), tea was poured by Lady Julia herself in true solidarity with her new American girl friends. About the time the crumpets and anchovy sandwiches were served, we were all asked to take a seat, any seat as no chair or sofa was corded "off limits" for human or canine use.

As Lady Julia poured and waxed on about spending summers at *Syon House*, one of our designers took a seat on an overstuffed sofa positioned in front of a floor to ceiling window. Soon, a commotion arose as we realized she had fallen through the sofa seat cushion straight through to the floor. As designers, we could all confirm that the descent was at least 18", not a simple popped spring or two. Trying to balance both a cup of tea as well as a small plate and napkin, she was literally held captive in a most compromising way.

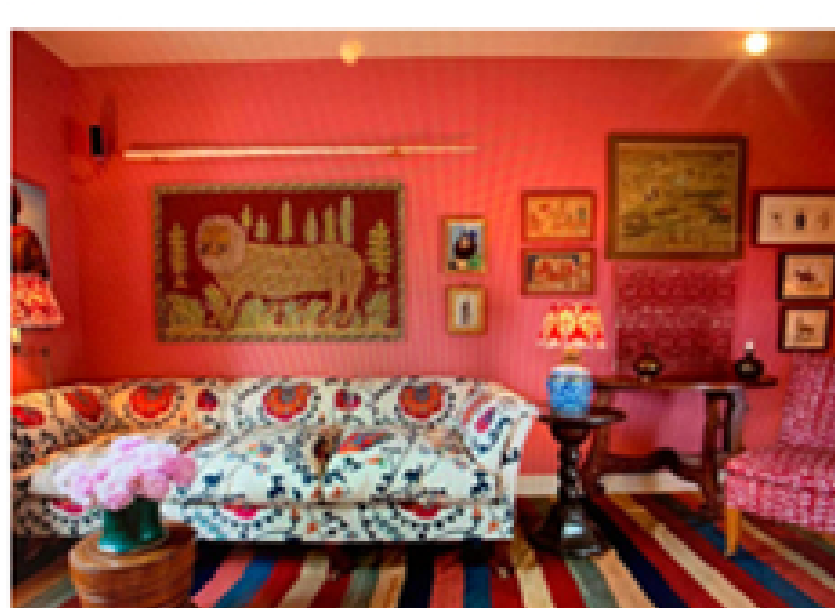
"Oh dear", Lady Julia tutted. "I completely forgot to tell you that the sofa was in disrepair!" Unplussed by the event, she continued to chat away while our friend in peril was rescued by her sister interior designers.

Formal tea continued without even breaking stride. Delighted by the fact that the room was filled with 16 American interior designers, Lady Julia couldn't resist asking for decorating advice. "This room really needs a freshing up, do any of you ladies have some suggestions?"



Madcap interior.

"You may want to fix your sofa first" we heard in a loud grumble coming from our friend who had fallen thru the sofa. Oh, we practical Americans! I would be happy to bet a few quid that the sofa is still sitting under that window with perhaps a few extra throw cushions, pinched from some other piece of upholstery and piled on it's rump sprung corner. Either that, or it has been bodged by the household staff, recovered in a left over fabric rescued from a storage room. No need to get too bothered by those things. When you have a room filled with priceless antiques, who even notices the color scheme?



The world will be watching this month as Britain decides whether to Brexit or not. If Brexit fails and Britain is thrown into chaos, Prime Minister Theresa May with her stiff upper lip, will be forced to retreat and lick her political wounds. Surely, she has a favorite club chair - overstuffed, covered in a cheerful chintz perhaps a little faded, maybe even a bit tattered, but well worn. Taking refuge and a long deserved rest, she will most likely pop the kettle, and as all Brits know, there is no problem that a good strong cuppa can't solve. Along with her fellow Brits, she will brace herself and soldier on believing that in time, all will be right with the world.



Let the rumpus begin!!!

Debra Blair

President

Debra Blair Design
dblair@blairdesignnyc.com
917-717-5020