



## STAR POWER



INTERIOR DESIGNER MARTYN LAWRENCE BULLARD SHARES THE SECRETS BEHIND HIS SOPHISTICATED AND ECLECTIC DESIGN PHILOSOPHY.

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**ENGLAND-BORN** and California-based Martyn Lawrence Bullard is the epitome of the term “celebrity designer.” As the star of Bravo’s “Million Dollar Decorators,” along with a multitude of design programs in the UK and across the globe, Bullard garnered praise for his opulent interiors filled with color, layers of texture and global influences. But he’s also renowned for the rooms he creates for a long list of superstar clients, ranging from Cher and Patti LaBelle to Khloe and Kourtney Kardashian.

In addition to an impressive residential portfolio, Bullard has overseen the design of several premier hotels and restaurants, is

the author of two books, has an atelier in West Hollywood and is currently collaborating on 14 product lines, including rugs, fabrics, jewelry, lighting and furniture.

He recently took a moment from his busy schedule to talk with us about his design style as well as a recent project he completed in Santa Barbara.

## **Phoenix Home & Garden: Where do you get your inspiration?**

**Martyn Lawrence Bullard:** My greatest influence is travel. I love going to new places, meeting new people and experiencing new sights, smells and tastes. All of that becomes part of my personal library, which sits inside of me and from which I pull for my designs. My work is definitely eclectic because I love so many things from so many different places and cultures. I enjoy mixing it all together, and I think it creates great character within interiors. If you look at my work, you'll see that I do a little bit of everything. There's no signature to my designs. I've done everything from creating a '70s disco apartment for fashion designer Tommy Hilfiger to restoring a 12th-century castle for a Russian oligarch.

## **PHG: Your work has been featured on TV and in leading shelter publications around the globe. How can homeowners bring your look into their interiors?**

**Bullard:** In a lot of my designs, you'll see these wild rooms with layers of wallpaper and expensive finishes. But the basis of that is color—it's the easiest way to transform a room, and you can do so inexpensively with paint. You can change the entire feeling of a room simply by painting the walls. Also, when you're mixing elements, it's important to have a lead color. That really is the unity. You can have something from Africa, a piece from your grandma's attic and an item that you bought online, but there has to be something that ties them together, and that comes back to color. It's the one detail that coordinates everything.

## **PHG: What's your secret for creating an eclectic interior?**

**Bullard:** Oscar Wilde, one of my great icons, said 'All beautiful things belong to the same age.' I interpret that to mean that you could have a Picasso plate, a plaster statue from the state fair and a print from Z Gallerie, and if they're meaningful to you and you put them together in a way that you find appealing, then they're all going to be beautiful at once, together and in unison. I'm a firm believer that if you find something you think is attractive and you group it together with other things you find similarly captivating, you'll have a vignette that creates an emotion within you. And that's the best result you can get out of decorating.



## **PHG: What are some trends you're seeing today in the design world?**

**Bullard:** I believe that trends should be something you make, not something you follow. That said, at the moment there's a big movement toward color, texture and layering. For the longest time, we've had this whole midcentury less-is-more experience and now it's going toward a more layered look. But not like we had in the '80s and '90s with heavy antiques and chintz. Now it's more about the mix—combining one great antique with modern furniture, cool photography with some oil paintings, and maybe throwing in some fantastic damask pillows. Magazines are showing these old-school, Mongiardino-inspired dramatic interiors, and we're even seeing it filtering down into stores such as CB2. There's an embracing of pattern, color and vibrant designs that's definitely infiltrating interiors again.

## **PHG: If I wanted to renovate my house, where would you suggest I start?**

**Bullard:** You have to think about the rooms that you really utilize on a daily basis. In my experience, that's often the kitchen. It's the heart of the home and really informs the rest of the interiors, so it should capture your lifestyle, taste and vision. Now, it's not necessarily the least expensive place to start, but you also want to put your money



Interior designer Martyn Lawrence Bullard's style has been described as "Hollywood glamour meets ethnic exotica." His interiors for the Hotel Californian in Santa Barbara exemplify that aesthetic. Traditional architectural touches, such as arches and vaulted ceilings, combine with sleek midcentury-style furnishings, bold custom tilework and Moroccan accents for a layered look that's colorful, sumptuous, worldly and, most importantly, comfortable.

into something that increases the value of your home. There are three areas that give an emotional yes or no to a house: the kitchen, bathrooms and the master bedroom. While the kitchen is a room that you live in, it's also one that sells a house.

**PHG: You recently designed the Hotel Californian in Santa Barbara. Tell us about that project.**

**Bullard:** Santa Barbara has a very strict design intent, maintaining its Spanish colonial/mission-style architecture, so it was very important to me to honor the history and aesthetic of the city. All of the architectural and design details, including the vaulted ceilings, archways and striped columns, are an homage to the architecture you see throughout the town. Now, I mixed it up and brought in my own version of a modern-day experience by adding midcentury furniture, which has more simplified forms and comfortable shapes. I took a lot of inspiration from 1950s Italian designers, such as Gio Ponti. Then I gave it a bold backdrop of black and white with pops of vibrant saffron yellow, deep eggplant and teal green, creating a fun and timeless mix that seems to resonate with young and old alike. It crosses the boundaries of time and transports you to fantasyland, which is what you always want from a vacation.

**PHG: The interiors are strongly Moroccan-influenced.**

**Why is that?**

**Bullard:** There was a big push toward Moroccan design in the Spanish colonial experience, particularly in the 1920s and '30s, which is when most of the architecture was built around Santa Barbara and Montecito. That's something I very much embraced with the hotel. Not only is it correct aesthetically, but it also adds a very sexy layer.

**PHG: Are you a fan of Santa Barbara?**

**Bullard:** How can you not be? It's the Riviera of California. From the historic Old Mission, which is an amazing site to see, to the stores on State Street, Santa Barbara has an architectural character that has been strictly maintained, preserving the original colonial feel and adding a beautiful integrity to the city. There's a lot of old-school flavor to the city, which is so wonderful because that is disappearing from so many places. Being on the ocean, it features a spectacular coastline, but it's also filled with great restaurants, nightlife, charming little shops and chilled-out vibes. It's a wonderful place to visit and, of course, it's got such a nice climate.

**For more information, see Sources on Page 134.**