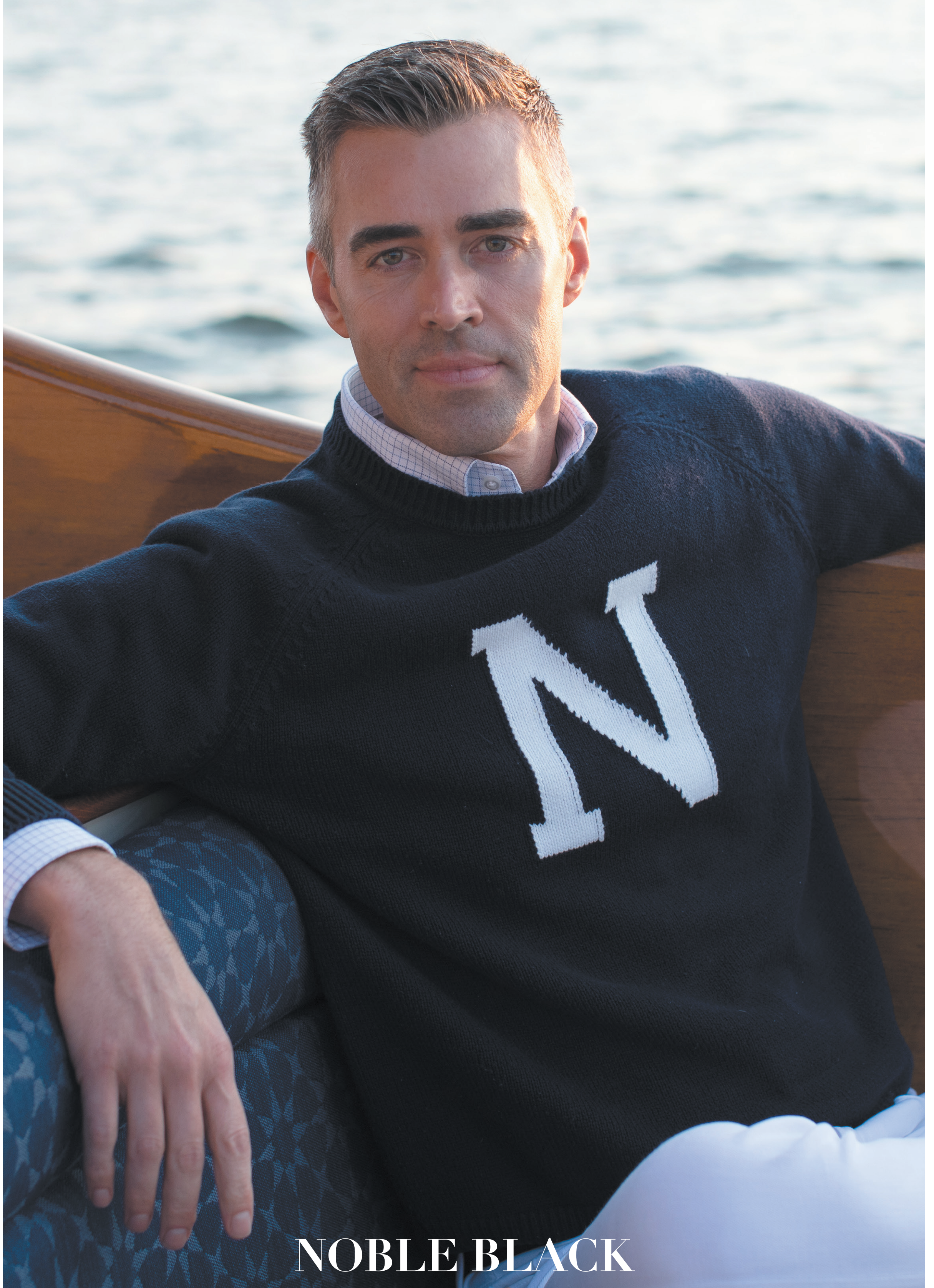


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# Noble Black

## On Service, Strategy, And Success

By Ty Wenzel

With over 20 years at the top of Manhattan’s luxury real estate market, Noble Black regularly ranks among the nation’s top brokers. Known for representing some of New York’s most famous addresses, he maintains a loyal clientele. Now, after more than 10 years at another brokerage, Black has returned to Corcoran. He brings his team and a portfolio of high-end properties that covers Manhattan and the Hamptons. In this conversation, he discusses his decision to rejoin Corcoran, the shifting expectations of buyers, and what it takes to succeed in one of the world’s most competitive real estate markets.

**Thank you for your time, Noble. You recently came back to Corcoran after more than 10 years. What brought you back, and why was this the right time?**

There were several reasons for my return, not one in particular. I was really struck by how well Corcoran is doing so many things. Their international partnership with Savilles was very attractive. They continue to totally dominate the new development sector — the gold standard in service and research. The backbone of services they offer, from marketing to technology, was extremely impressive, as was their referral network. And of course, I was reminded and struck by just how engaged Pam is at every level of the business, whether on resales, international connections, or new developments. As I assessed where my business would grow the most and allow us to up the bar for what we offer our

clients, it was a clear decision to me.

**How do you balance the Hamptons and the city when it comes to listings/clients?**

For a long time, I wanted to expand my business to the Hamptons, while I have had a home in the Hamptons for over a decade, over the years, I realized that so many of my clients were in the Hamptons as well as other luxury markets. For me, that meant finding the right agents — people who could deliver the same level of service and care that our clients have come to expect in the city. Today, we have a dedicated Hamptons team that combines our commitment to exceptional client service with deep, local expertise. Each of our agents has strong ties to the community — and two of them were even born and raised in the Hamptons — giving our clients true insider knowledge of the market.

**Was there something specific about Corcoran’s culture, leadership, or platform that made you believe this was the best place for you and your team going forward?**

Yes on all of the above. I was struck by how many people I greatly respect were still at Corcoran from when I was here previously — both brokers and staff. There are so many people who have been here for 20 to 30 years and love it. They clearly do many things right. And the brand continues to enjoy a sterling reputation among custom-

ers. The reaction from our clients has been so positive and reaffirming.

**You’ve had an interesting journey from law and television production to real estate. What skills from those earlier jobs most influenced how you work with clients today?**

The TV production was a short stint, though a fun and quirky one! Practicing law is what really shaped the service I and my team strive to provide to our clients. I view my job not as one of selling a product but as an advisor. I try to really listen and understand what a client needs and what they want (not always the same), then assess the landscape and help them reach the decision that’s best for them. Sometimes that means a buyer passes on a property or a seller waits to sell. But I try to play the long game, and put their interest first, and I’ve found that doing that, the transactions eventually happen, and loyalty and referrals follow.

**You’re often ranked among the top real estate professionals in the country. What do you think has been the most important factor in keeping that level of success year after year?**

Client service — keeping the client’s interest front and center, continuing to improve the service we offer — whether analytical data for buyers or marketing reach for sellers, and doing so in a manner that’s highly professional, ethical, and respectful — of the client and our colleagues.

**Many people describe you as a “trusted advisor.” How do you build and maintain that trust, especially in the competitive and high-stakes world of Manhattan luxury real estate?**

By truly putting the client first. Often, that means counseling them towards an outcome that’s not in my personal short-term interest. But prioritizing their interest above all else builds trust and loyalty, which pays far larger dividends in the long term.

**You’ve represented properties**

**at some of Manhattan’s most famous addresses, including 15 Central Park West and Hudson Yards. How have you seen buyer preferences change over the last decade?**

Buyers’ expectations have risen dramatically. They now prioritize time and convenience like never before. For new development, that means finishes on par with a bespoke apartment and amenities that answer every whim. We’ve seen a huge rise in demand for furnished residences for this reason. For resale, buyers heavily prefer properties that are truly turn-key/recently renovated. And for those in need of renovation, they need to be truly exceptional and/or priced incredibly well to attract a buyer.

**Branded residences, like the Waldorf Astoria and Baccarat Residences, are becoming more popular in the luxury market. What attracts buyers to these properties, and how are they different from traditional co-ops and condos?**

Buyers are increasingly prioritizing time and convenience. These branded residences offer all of the services of a five-star hotel with the privacy and comfort of a private home.

**Your business relies on discretion and the protection of client privacy. In a time of social media and constant exposure, how do you find a balance between marketing and maintaining confidentiality?**

Social media has definitely become a fact of life and, in some ways, a necessary evil for real estate. But I never let it compromise a client relationship. We view social media as a tool to gain exposure for clients, but not to brag about the clients we represent. I’m very proud of the fact that many of our very biggest clients and transactions have never been made public.

**Looking back on your career so far, what’s been the most significant turning point for you?**

Looking back on the past 20 years, what’s been the most influential for me isn’t necessarily individual transactions but several key relationships with individuals who have been kind enough to be great connectors, referral sources, or mentors, all of whom are now friends. I’ve been very fortunate in that regard.

**You’ve worked with some of the most discerning clients in the world. What have those relationships taught you about people, success, or even yourself?**

Without a doubt, what I find most interesting and enjoyable about my job is the people I get to meet. I’m very fortunate that a sizeable piece of my business is with recognizable names — whether they’re big names in music or film, finance, or government. I think I always understood people are people, and while one person may have a more public job or make a lot more money or have a great amount of power, they still have some basic desires, and where and how they live is very personal. I get to see that very personal and intimate piece of their life. I always respect their position and remember my role, but also do not treat them any differently than I would anyone else looking to buy a property and make it a happy home.

**Real estate in Manhattan is a demanding career. How do you recharge and maintain balance outside of work?**

I spend a lot of time outside in my garden in Sag Harbor, or having dinners with friends and family. And I try never to mind taking a call or answering an email — I enjoy what I do, so it really doesn’t seem hard to maintain a balance. Besides, my husband is a workaholic, so I seem to be the one with the less demanding job!

**If you weren’t a real estate broker today, what do you think you’d be doing?**

In my nightmares, when I’m feeling anxious, I’m back practicing law. In my fantasies, I’d be developing — whether condos or flipping houses or doing interior design. We’ll see what the future holds... hopefully not a return to practicing law!



# Real Estate Confab

## Do Lower Interest Rates Stimulate Demand In Luxury Markets?

By Ty Wenzel

In today's changing market, interest rates are a major concern for all areas of real estate. Although luxury buyers tend to be less sensitive to rate changes than first-time homebuyers, there is increasing interest in how the recent shifts in borrowing costs might affect the timing of high-end purchases. Are luxury market buyers truly less likely to factor in rate changes, or are they opting to wait for more favorable conditions before re-entering the market? We asked leading real estate experts to share their views on whether lower rates could stimulate demand among luxury buyers who have been observing from the sidelines.

**Michaela Keszler, Sotheby's International Realty**

Absolutely — even in the luxury segment of the Hamptons market, lower borrowing costs can play a significant role in buyer behavior. While many high-end buyers aren't as rate-

sensitive as first-time or more entry-level purchasers, they still want to be financially savvy. Many of them leverage financing strategically, whether it's for liquidity, investment purposes, or tax planning. When rates drop, even a small reduction in the cost of capital can be a compelling reason for buyers to act — especially if they've been watching the market.

When rates ease and the market shows movement — more accepted offers, more properties going into contract, and more competitive bidding — it creates a sense of urgency. Buyers who may have been sitting on the sidelines feel the shift and don't want to miss their opportunity. That's when we often see pent-up demand released, even at the top of the market.

Also, when financing becomes more attractive, buyers may feel more comfortable stretching their budget — moving from, say, a \$5M search into the \$6M+ range — which

increases competition across all tiers of the market. It creates a ripple effect.

So yes, lower rates can definitely be the spark that activates the high-end segment — not necessarily because buyers need financing, but because they recognize a moment of opportunity. They're ready to make a move when the timing is right.

**Maida Srdanovic, Compass**

Most luxury buyers don't rely heavily on financing, but interest rates still influence how confident they feel about timing a purchase. Over the past year, many well-qualified buy-

ers have been holding back, waiting for the right moment. Now that borrowing costs are starting to ease, that hesitation is giving way to more activity. With inventory still tight, especially at the very top of the market, we're seeing pent-up demand translate into stronger showings and quicker deals. In the \$10M+ range, where quality properties are few and far between, it's less about affordability and more about psychology and timing, and those stars are beginning to align.

**Deborah Pirro, Daniel Gale**

I do believe high-end purchases are rate sensitive in the sense that a buyer with \$100

million budget may end up purchasing something for \$25 or \$50 million, due to the cost of that money. Rates would have to drop substantially to see any significant pent-up demand come back to the market. When that does happen, prices will further increase due to supply and demand factors.

We will always see extra extraordinary money in this marketplace and deals coming together. More than anything else, this year's deals have been affected by global events, the initial downturn in the financial markets at the beginning of 2025, and then, of course, the rebound that we have seen in the second and third quarters of those financial markets.



Courtesy photos

# Kim Seybert

## Bringing Fashion To The Fall Table

By Ty Wenzel

Kim Seybert has built a career from dressing tables with the same elegance found on runways. A resident of the Hamptons, she specializes in lifestyle and entertaining. Her luxury table décor is available at high-end retailers such as Neiman Marcus, Bergdorf Goodman, and Bloomingdale's, as well as specialty shops worldwide and her own website. Architectural Digest once noted that her products are not just beautiful; they are whimsical and impressively made. Seybert has become almost synonymous with a well-dressed table.

Before starting her own brand, Seybert designed dresses and beaded evening gowns. While on business trips to China in the 1990s, she became fascinated by the textiles and craftsmanship she encountered in open-air markets. An affordable pocket square, completely hand-embroidered, inspired her. She realized the same quality of craftsmanship could be applied to table décor.

At that time, most dining accessories were simple and plain. While redecorating her apartment, Seybert began making her own items — placemats, napkins, and runners filled with color and detail. Friends and colleagues took notice and asked for items of their own. When she brought samples to Henri Bendel's open viewing for new designers, she quickly caught the attention of the head buyer. Soon after, Neiman Marcus

placed a company-wide order. In 1998, the Kim Seybert brand officially launched, creating a completely new category of modern table décor.

Since then, Seybert's seasonal collections have regularly appeared in design and lifestyle media. They have found a place on the tables of celebrities, creatives, business leaders, fine restaurants, and dedicated hosts. Her work showcases global craft traditions; beading, hand-dyeing, embroidery, hand-painting, and mouth-blown glass are central to her collections.

What started with placemats and napkins has grown to include dinnerware, barware, flatware, coasters, cocktail napkins, and collaborations like the Baccarat x Kim Seybert line.

Her fall tabletops showcase the richness of the season. Layered textures, intricate patterns, and vibrant color palettes aim to bring warmth and character to both formal and casual gatherings. Whether for a dinner party in the Hamptons or an apartment in the city, Seybert's approach combines craftsmanship with a sense of occasion.

As the season changes, her designs reflect the spirit of autumn: festive, lively, and crafted to make every table feel like the heart of the home.

Learn more by visiting [kimseybert.com](http://kimseybert.com).



Courtesy photos



# Marshall Watson

## A Master Of Symmetry, Proportion, & Harmony

By Rolise Rachel



The Zelman residence in Rosemary Beach, FL. Photo by Lisa Romerein

Marshall Watson, who resides in East Hampton, is known for his sophisticated interiors and European-inspired aesthetic. He masterfully combines precision, harmony, and history with understated luxury, creating timeless, livable spaces. His deep understanding of historical periods and styles informs meticulously researched designs that always make architectural sense.

Marshall's interiors are celebrated for their elegant proportions and grounded symmetry, resulting in a harmonious flow. He focuses on subtle repetitions of color, pattern, and material. His proportions reflect architectural principles derived from Greek and Roman proportions that incorporate the golden ratio.

I was introduced to Marshall Watson by the East Hampton Historical Society during the 2024 East Hampton House & Garden Tour, and then again at this summer's Summer Design Luncheon, where Marshall discussed his latest Rizzoli book, "Defining Elegance."

### Where was your childhood home?

Prairie Village Kansas (Kansas City).

### Is your inspiration from early memories?

I was inspired by my uncle, who was a landscape painter. I was inspired by my grandmother, who took me painting frequently. My grandfather took me to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art all the time; it was kind of like our playground, playing among Rodin sculptures. I loved the Kansas City Art Institute and knew many of our parents' artist friends who worked for Hallmark Cards, had wonderful art teachers, music teachers, drama teachers... My mother loved decorating, and we grew up in a beautiful house with many antiques and beautiful things that had been handed down from generation to generation. I redid my own bedroom in high school with an acid rock theme and hallucinogenic posters. Slightly different from what I do now. In the summers, we traveled to Michigan, where we stayed in old clapboard cottages filled with wicker and old stuff that had the scents of use and nostalgia.

### When did you buy your East Hampton home?

We bought our first 650-sq-ft house on Rich-

ardson Avenue in Springs, and I decorated up a storm, influenced by my love of Swedish 18th-century design, unexpected but really pretty... published in 11 magazines, and then we accidentally sold it (another story). Paul found our Springs property on Gardiner's Bay. I designed and built the house after researching Greek Revival ship captains' houses in Sag Harbor and the Federalist details of homes in New England and several Southern plantations.

### What is your favorite place to dine on the East End?

My favorite place in East Hampton to dine is out on our bluff, anytime late spring or early fall. Especially when the moon rises. But if I have a place that I really love, often, it is 1770 House outside under the crepe myrtles (and in the wintertime, I love the meatloaf down in the speakeasy basement). If I'm going for the best prepared seafood on the eastern end of Long Island, then I go to Bostwick's on the Bay and taste Damian's fabulous, creative cuisine... American, French, and Pan Asian!

### Tell us about the journey.

My journey to design was circuitous. I was a painter, artist, sculptor, then I chose the world of set design. I was a scenic painter, and then I spent about a decade pursuing my acting career on and off Broadway and on the soap opera, "As the World Turns." Set design taught me a love of research, acting, and taught me to observe, to listen carefully, to interpret. Painting taught me the love of a visceral moment. And my training at Stanford in engineering, art, and English, gave me the appreciation of the world around me and developed my curiosity. My journey to interior design was a combination of all these factors, and just made sense. I love people, I love working with people, I love realizing their dreams and their aspirations, and I love taking care of people and making them happy.

### How do these spaces reflect your design philosophy?

The spaces that I create have a common denominator: elegance. My second book, "Defining Elegance," speaks to my design philosophy: light, peace, balance, comfort, proportion, romance, and harmony. I create spaces that are functional as well as comfortable, integrated into the architecture and environment, appropriate in every way. They



Photos courtesy Marshall Watson



answer my clients' dreams and aspirations, detailed, complex but seemingly effortless, subtle, not showy, the backgrounds to my clients' lives, not the star of their show. I believe that all clients have taste, and it is our job to realize, recognize, and develop their sense of taste. With all the design arrows in my design quiver.

### Do you live in East Hampton year round?

Yes, I live in East Hampton year-round, every weekend in the winter, and the shoulder seasons are as beloved by me as our exquisite summers.

### What is your favorite destination and inspiration?

In New York, the new Frick, the Metropolitan Museum, the Met Opera, Lincoln Center, symphonic music, and Broadway — I'm a culture geek. France, England, and Scandinavia are my inspirations for design, gardening, and food.

### Can you share a memorable collaboration with an architect that significantly impacted your design process?

Yes, I collaborated with architect Stephen Morgan on a home in Cabo that we built with extraordinary sensitivity to classic Spanish/Italian influences, Mexican sense of romance, and Mayan inspiration... The house and our interiors landed on the cover of Architectural Digest! Stephen is the most collaborative of artists and architects, a problem solver, and he lives on Shelter Island.

### How does your in-depth knowledge of different periods and styles influence your approach to designing interiors?

I have always been well-versed in the periods of interiors, architecture, and furnishings. I have always loved research and poring over books and periodicals to gain inspiration. I pick up inspiration everywhere I travel in Europe and South America and all over the United States. I think I'm just Mr. Curious. And I can see beauty in a number of cases. The reverse, though, is also true. It pains me to see thoughtless architecture, impersonal interiors, and badly proportioned furniture.

### Your interiors are known for their calmness and lightness what specific techniques do you employ to achieve this sense of harmony?

I believe in preserving good architecture, whether it be traditional or modern, as long as it is well-observed, well-executed, and well-thought-out. I have used historic architectural elements such as iron cornices from bank buildings, elaborate carved doors from the late 19th century, and even terra cotta carvings from the façade of buildings, carefully integrated into my interiors. It gives a sense of permanence, history, and, of course, it's the best kind of recycling!

My interiors are known for their calm and their lightness. I believe in bringing the light into my interiors as much as possible and in any way that I can. I use a mirror in an unintrusive way to increase the size of the space. I use high gloss paint on ceilings and moldings to bounce the light off and give an uplifted feeling. I keep the color palettes rather unified rather than shocking. My interiors are not eclectic. The proportions are pleasing to the eye, and there is always a sense of balance and harmony. All of this contributes to a sense of calm and lightness.

### In your second book, you showcase work from various environments. How do your design principles adapt to different climates and geographies?

We have worked all over the country and we've worked all over the world. We think it's much more fun to integrate ourselves into the environment and culture in which our clients have chosen to live. We want Mexico to look like a fantasy of Mexico. We want Sweden to look like a fantasy of Sweden. We want New York to look like a fantasy of New York. We don't want Sweden to look like New York. We research and we research. We absorb and we try to get the essence of the location of the property, and the environment of the country.

### Could you describe how you translate a homeowner's lifestyle and the history of a house into a distinctive design?

It's easy to translate a homeowner's lifestyle into a distinctive design. That's our job,

and it's even more fun when the locale and the history of the building are interesting, because we take all that into consideration. We develop something truly unique for our clients and their aspirations. We have a lot of design tools in our design toolbox, through years of experience.

### How do you incorporate subtle repetitions in color, pattern, or material to create a cohesive and harmonious interior?

We call them design cues. For instance, in my own apartment, you will see the repetition of iron. Subtly laid out, you will see a repetition of brass, you will see a repetition of the same wood colors, and you will see a repetition of blue and white, beautiful mahogany wood tones of the 18th-century furniture. All these cues meld the diverse elements and create a cohesive and harmonious interior.

### What advice would you give to someone looking to develop their own sense of personal style in interior design?

Test yourself. If you're interested in interior design, and you want to develop your personal style, simply pick up a number of magazines, buy my book, visit the period rooms at the Metropolitan Museum, at the Brooklyn Museum, observe your own fashion sense, and the colors you wear. What texture do you like? What period are you drawn to? And what art do you love? Keep your eyes and senses open to everything around you. Go to Europe and visit the great houses. Experience openly. Be endlessly curious and not judgmental. Yet be discerning, analytical as to why something appeals to you and why something doesn't appeal to you. And sometimes you have to take a leap and make choices. Then you will find your style.

Visit [marshallwatsoninteriors.com](http://marshallwatsoninteriors.com)





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