

Big Patterns, Bright Colors

Don't be afraid — take a lesson from Dorothy Draper. By Kimberly Merritt

The Astors, the Vanderbilts and the Rockefellers — during the early 1900s, they and many others in the smart set used the Mt. Washington Hotel in Bretton Woods as their summer playground. They were drawn there by the elegance of the hotel and its breathtaking views.

Over the years, changing hands, the grand dame gradually faded and in 1991 was put up for auction. A group of New Hampshire businesspeople bought it; they were determined to restore it to its former glory.

Walk into a room on the hotel's second floor — the Dorothy Draper room — and you can instantly see the restoration is well on its way. You find yourself awash in color and pattern that is bold and beautiful. It is the work of world-renowned interior designer Carleton Varney, president/owner of Dorothy Draper and Co. in New York City (www.dorothydraper.com).

Founded by the famed doyenne of interior design Dorothy Draper, the company — the oldest interior design firm in the country — has been involved in the redesign of many noted properties and resorts the world over — The Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, the Greenbrier Hotel in West Virginia and The Breakers in Palm Beach among them.

Starting her design work in the 1920s, Draper rejected the dowdy color schemes and typical interiors of the Edwardian

era, and instead designed her rooms with a combination of vibrant colors, vivid patterns and bold contrasts that were to become her signature. To her, color was the most important aspect of interior design. Varney notes, "She felt people reacted to color and were less content if they lived in a colorless world."

Draper also advised her followers to "jumble periods cheerfully," which allowed novice interior decorators the freedom to experiment without restrictions.

Since joining the company in 1962, Varney has carried on Draper's design vision and added his own touches. A Varney room is both colorful and comfortable — never drab. He loves dramatic shapes and bold colors, all while creating a traditional, elegant interior. He says his goal was to give the hotel great presence and bring a "new sense of color to the resort."

Everything Draper is evident in this room. The mix of color and pattern makes a bold statement. From the aqua on the walls to the red carpet underfoot — it's a feast for the senses.

Inspired by the lovely blue shades found at Monticello and Mount Vernon, Varney wanted to add "magical colors to the hotel — and not your usual browns and beiges."

The spacious guest bedroom he designed features a king-sized bed and a comfortable sitting area in front of a fireplace, adorned with a black-and-white pho-



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