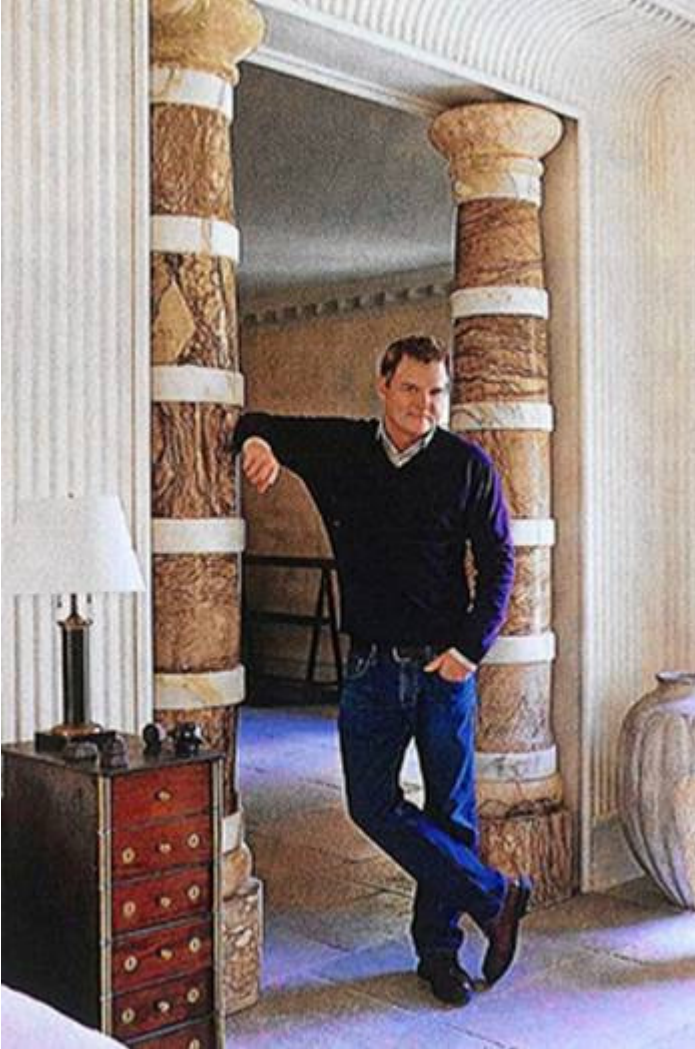


60 Seconds With: Designer Stephen Sills

Edited from an interview by Deb Schwartz

August 13, 2011



Stephen Sills

As the first creative director of **the Apthorp**, the landmark residential building occupying an entire New York block between Broadway and West End Avenue, interior designer Stephen Sills is masterminding the renovating equivalent of a celebrity makeover.

But Mr. Sills, a soft-spoken Oklahoma native known for his tranquil color palettes, sophisticated use of antiques and dramatic modern art—and a client list that includes Vera Wang, Anna Wintour and Tina Turner—remains comfortably above the fray.

In bringing contemporary glamour and ease to the Apthorp's Gilded Age beauty, Mr. Sills is working the same magic he used to update such properties as the Connaught hotel in London and the St. Regis hotels in New York and Washington, which now dazzle with radiant hues and an unstuffy elegance.



A kitchen he designed in **the Apthorp** building

Design isn't about stuff anymore. Young rich people aren't interested in provenance or the perfect pair of antique lamps. They're interested in the overall look and concept.

My signature touches are subtle color schemes and classic, simple upholstery. I don't do American decorator upholstery like Lawson couches or rounded arms. I do tone-on-tone monochromatic but then at the end I'll throw in an off color to give it energy and mix it up.

Midcentury modern is so over. New trends are emerging: cleaner, more spiritual, thought-provoking.

The most common decorating mistake is overdecorating. There's nothing more vulgar in an interior. I love the 19th century but we're not living in the 19th century.

If I could own any artwork it would be a Poussin landscape—preferably without people.

My most extravagant purchase was a Cy Twombly painting. Recently I bought a Greek fourth-century life-size marble lion. It's in my entry hall, where it leaps up on the wall.

I'm getting into collecting orchids. In Florida recently I found these beautiful white Brassia that are very rare.

I grew up in a town of 10,000 in southern Oklahoma. It was a magical period. There is a lot of beauty in the flatlands of Oklahoma—scrub brush and beautiful skies and colors.

I have a weakness for a McDonald's fish filet sandwich. It's grotesque. But delicious.

Paris has the best antiques shops. I love Alexandre Biaggi's. He's an arbiter of really original taste and has such a vision of what's coming. If money is no object, there's Kugel. It's all 17th- and 18th-century objects with provenance. It's so over the top. There's nothing in there under \$100,000.

On a budget, the best place to shop is antiques malls. The Stamford Antique Center in Connecticut is great.

I love the French soap Provence Santé, in verveine. Every time I go to Paris I buy like 20 or 30 bars that last me a year. And I love all kinds of Italian linens, including Anichini, in a really heavy thread count.

If I were banished from my home I'd live in the house off the coast of Sardinia that was in the Elizabeth Taylor movie "Boom." It's the most beautiful house in the world—sort of Santa Fe-adobe-Italian-contemporary, with thick walls and gorgeous stone floors, billowing linen curtains and great art, all on this craggy mountaintop. It's breathtaking.

Full article hyperlink:

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424053111904007304576496541925740396.html?mod=googlenews_wsj