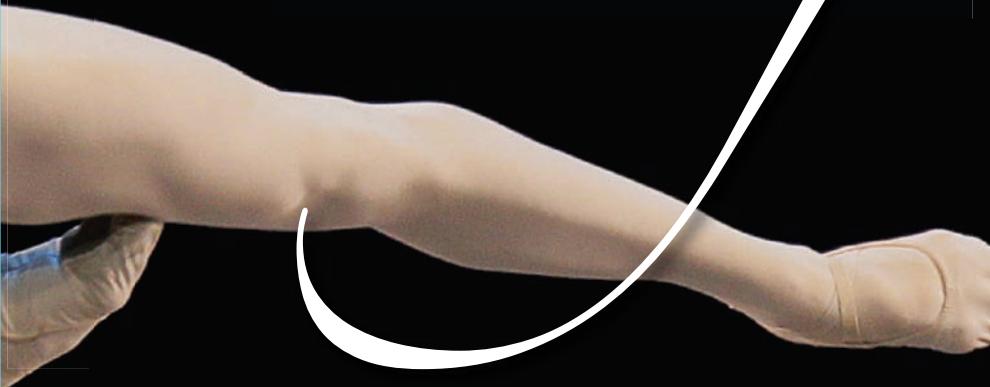


SEPTEMBER 2011

WAG



THE ART OF. *Living*



**CHASE
FINLAY'S
LEAP TO
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**SINGING
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DESIGNING WOMAN

*Christina Sullivan Roughan
on the art of home decor*

By PATRICIA ESPINOSA

This family room had to be sophisticated, friendly and functional to fulfill the client's requirements. The chairs in front of the fireplace are from Roman Thomas, the blond wood console from Plantation LA, the sofas are custom and the carpet from Patterson, Flynn and Martin. Photograph courtesy of Tocar Interior Design



As a child growing up in central Massachusetts, interior designer Christina Sullivan Roughan remembers how she always loved to make things pretty.

“Even at a young age, I loved glamorous things, things that sparkled, exquisite details,” she says.

So it’s not surprising that after college and a course of study at the Paris Fashion Institute, she landed a coveted internship with creative services at Ralph Lauren, where her first job was archiving and cataloging the fabrics, silhouettes and ornamentations of vintage garments for use as inspiration by designers for future collections.

From that position she went on to spend 10 years at Polo Ralph Lauren, designing and overseeing the implementation of retail stores and showrooms worldwide. Building off her success at RL and then Tommy Hilfiger, Roughan launched her own design firm, where her talent for combining modern and traditional interiors in unexpected ways garnered the attention of such prominent clients as Donna Karan and Takashimaya, along with interior design editors. Indeed, Roughan’s work has graced the pages of magazines such as House Beautiful, Elle Decor, Quest and WAG!

Determined to expand her business, she formed Tocar Design with Susan Bednar Long. For 12 years, their projects encompassed high-end residential commissions in Westchester and Fairfield counties, New York City, the Hamptons, Philadelphia’s Main Line, Park City, Utah and London as well as work with Oceania Cruise Lines and Starwood Hotels and Resorts. They even completed several boutique projects, including a luxury yacht.

Today, Roughan runs her own firm, Roughan Interior Design, in Greenwich.

Recently, I had the pleasure of chatting with her about the art of home design.

Our focus this month in WAG is the art of living. With that in mind, do you set out to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony when designing a client’s home?

“Each of Roughan’s interiors is designed with our clients’ needs and desires in mind. The process is all about what the clients wish to convey in the look of their homes. I am delighted to say that the majority of Roughan’s clientele are happy people. Therefore, their interiors tend to convey a sense of joyful sophistication.”

Some people make a distinction between interior decorating and interior design. Is there a difference?

“This is a question that many people ask. In my opinion, a decorator tends to work with existing floor plans, rework the space, choose paint colors, throw pillows, etc. A designer will move walls, create floor plans for each space, design custom furniture, convert bathrooms and kitchens and work with architects to complete a fuller vision of the home.”

Do you see interior design as an art form?

“Oh yes, it’s like an open canvas, when you start designing a space. Every detail creates layers of personality that shape each room. Every color, furniture, accessory should be well thought out and designed with beauty as well as function. Good design is design that is functional as it is an expression of the way we live. Roughan designs interiors to live by.”

So how do you then balance your vision with the needs of the client without compromising your art?

“Every client is different. Some may want to be involved from the beginning



This living room captures Christina Sullivan Roughan's signature look – a mix of traditional, represented by the Old Masters-style painting, and modern, evoked by the furnishings' clean lines.

through the end, and others do not. It's all about organizing and prioritizing our vision to accommodate our clients' lifestyles. That is how we achieve design balance without compromising our art."

Is there an artist or architect that you draw inspiration from?

"Inspiration appears in so many ways, and I have favorites at different times in my life. Currently, I have been inspired by Bernard McWilliams' photography. His prints tend to look like Rothko's. The colors are so vibrant and beautiful, they look like painting. Some designers who are visionaries that I admire are Billy Baldwin, David Hicks and more recently Ralph Lauren Creative Services (where I was trained). Alfredo Paredes and Karen Eliot Ralbowsky have created visions for RL for years and are amazing at what they do. When it comes to architecture, Jean Michel Frank and Robert Stern are the ones whose books I constantly go back to for inspiration."

What would you say are your greatest influences when it comes to your work?

"My greatest influences are the experiences I have had and continue to have in my life such as schooling in Paris when I

was 19 and visiting Yves Saint Laurent's couture house, traveling to Turkey and gasping at magnificent history and architecture at the Hagia Sophia, volunteering in Haiti and experiencing the warmth of people and such a beautiful culture, listening to music from Bach to U2 to Mumford & Sons. These influences continue to shape and influence my interiors."

Most designers say they don't follow trends. But what our readers really want to know, especially as we head into the fall season, is what's hot in home decor?

"Funny, as I was just thinking about trends. Lately, I see a lot of shades of black, white, and taupe, with splashes of rich vibrant colors such as aubergine, moss and cordovan in the accessories. This kind of color combination seems to be appearing all over the place and could definitely be described as a 'trend.'"

How would you describe your signature look?

"My signature style has always been modern/traditional and you can see it through my body of work for the past 20 years. I love creating interiors that are sophisticated, tailored, crisp and most important, friendly." ■