



In the living room, Ashton, a long-haired dachshund, just loves the cozy English-style armchair from Barclay Butera Home. The chair's mix of French, blue paisley cushions with colorful, colored fabric upholstery, and a Colonial East to West rug, also from Barclay Butera, is a surprise in the traditional style.

Photo: Michael O'Connell

# at home with a FURNISHINGS FASHIONISTA

Barclay Butera's  
Newport Beach house  
is about real life, far  
from the buzz of the  
home-fashion industry.



BY GIANLUCA AND MANROT PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES CANNON PRODUCED BY LAURA HUI



**Right:** An antique English bamboo cabinet introduces the British Colonial style in the entry. Seashells, coral, and a shell-encrusted mirror reference the seaside location.

**Below:** Home-furnishings and interior designer Barclay Butera avoids a predictable beach-house style at his Newport Beach home with a friendly nod to the sea followed by a deep—and unexpected—bow to British Colonial design.

## With his chiseled jawline,

symmetrical features, and ice-blue eyes, interior and furnishings designer Barclay Butera only looks like a model. His closest brush with the catwalk occurs twice a year, when he debuts his latest home-furnishings designs at the spring and fall furniture markets in High Point, North Carolina. Cribbing from the haute couture runway, his showroom is staged to startle—or at least start a buzz. “I consider myself a fashion designer for the home, and each [market’s] collection has a different theme. It all goes back to the idea of the fashion runway. Each show is dramatically different and raises the bar in home fashion.”

For the man who once pitched safari tents in his showroom to evoke the mood of that season’s *Out of Africa*-inspired collection, his primary residence in Newport Beach, California, is tuned to a surprisingly low, hype-free key. (He also has homes in Manhattan and Park City, Utah.) Every room is a riff on blue-and-white, and a soothing realism replaces showroom theatrics. But Barclay’s signature style—which is, in a word, layered—permeates every inch. “I layer fabrics and wall coverings,” he says, summing up his approach to design.

“In my home, I’ve mixed things like batik-patterned fabric with blue English paisley wallpaper and used all kinds of different textures, from raw silk to deep-blue velvet,” he illustrates. Wallpaper stars in every room. “I’ve always believed in its power to create separate spaces with unique emotions.” He underscores the living room’s Ralph Lauren Home toile wallpaper with upholstered furniture and textiles he designed and manufactured himself, such as the blue velvet and paisley fabrics on the pillows. “The house is about 80 percent my designs, and the rest is Ralph Lauren Home furniture and wallpaper,” he estimates.

A California native, Barclay wanted to avoid a typical California beach-house style for his ’50s ranch house—“typical” being the red-flag word. Though he used such beachy elements as nautical prints, seashells and coral, grass-cloth wall coverings, and sisal rugs, they serve an auxiliary, not primary, role and thus avoid cliché. Instead of kowtowing to the location, Barclay acknowledged it, then let his natural inclinations do the decorating.

“I’m grounded in British Colonial design, but I believe in pushing the envelope. I bring in elements of the Far East, France, and other European countries, especially Spain. I’m drawn to that heavy, turned-leg look of Spanish furniture,” he explains. (The bed in the master suite, though a repro British Colonial design, illustrates his attraction to the chunky posts of carved wood that characterize early Spanish furniture.) Despite its mixed bag of provenances and periods, his home—if one were forced to put a name to its prevailing style—can be defined as British Colonial. “I do have that English, handmade element





British Colonial style is sustained in the living room with a mahogany console table. Barclay designed the glass lamps to allow a change of contents.







In the richly textured family room, an L-shaped sofa in oyster-colored Belgian linen from the Butera line joins a sea-grass ottoman and armchair. With high wainscoting of batten board topped with a crown molding and a band of raffia, Barclay draws the eye up to create a sense of more vertical space.







**Left:** The dining room illustrates the home's mix of Barclay Butera Home and Ralph Lauren Home furnishings. The table is Lauren, the chairs Butera. Navy lamp shades add a traditional feel to the custom shell chandelier.

**Below:** Barclay blew out a kitchen wall to open up the space to the family room. New built-in cabinetry housing a farmhouse sink has the appearance of freestanding furniture.

**Top right:** Chris Taylor landscaped the grounds of the '50s ranch house with English-style formal hedges and topiaries.

**Above:** In back, Taylor's high boxwoods screen the pool and outdoor fireplace for privacy.



## BARCLAY BUTERA

DESIGNER AT HOME He looks too young to have achieved so much, but Barclay insists he was born into the business. "I got the creativity from my mother, a designer, and the business instincts from my father, who was in publishing," he says. With a degree in political science and economics, Barclay started his own case goods company in Los Angeles in 1998. Now with more than 100 employees, Barclay Butera Inc. includes three retail collection showrooms, two Barclay Butera Home brand-to-the-trade showrooms (in Los Angeles and in New York's O&O Building), and a manufacturing plant in Los Angeles. His furniture is distributed by 300-plus retailers, and the brand still grows: In 2008, Kravet Collections will release his line of fabrics.

become known for Hollywood Regency design, but I do my own twist on it."

Silk and linen fabrics and bamboo shades add warmth to floor-to-ceiling windows in the loft-style apartment. Two separate seating areas form a living/dining room. A velvet sofa, faux leopard skin fabric and raffia linen chairs, all in subtle shades of green and chocolate, are backdropped by a tone-on-tone botanical wallpaper. A black lacquer chinoiserie coffee table and deep, rich woods add depth. "There are so many luxurious elements in this apartment, but you can still see them relaxing in it, so it becomes a retreat from the chaos of hectic lives," says Butera.

In the master bedroom, a hint of Hollywood glamour prevails in mirrored tables, mercury-glass picture frames, luxurious linens and Butera's tufted Davis chair, named after actress Bette Davis.

"Despite hints of English and French, I moved toward an Asian influence because I wanted it to feel like a Zen escape," Butera explains, pointing out the Asian portrait in the second bedroom, converted to a study, where a tiger fabric covers a chair paired with an imposing writing desk. In the master bedroom, there's Asian artwork, and in the living room, Baker lamps reference an Oriental water vessel.

Each room flows with an artful blend of comfortable yet luxurious pieces, a perfect counterbalance to a fast-paced Hollywood jet-set lifestyle. Butera comments, "When you step into the apartment, you immediately feel at home. That's what I love about it." □

TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: Thermador oven and range. Votive candles from Slatkin & Co. romanticize setting. BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT: Philips' flat-panel television with artwork from Barclay Butera Home and Ralph Lauren's glass lamp atop Baker's Fluted Low cabinet.

atop Baker's Fluted Low cabinet. Second bath features antique Asian panel and shower curtain from Barclay Butera Home. Luxurious blue linens from Schlossberg Switzerland change setting in master. See Sources on page 248.





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**Below:** Barclay blew out a kitchen wall to open up the space to the family room. New built-in cabinetry housing a farmhouse sink has the appearance of freestanding furniture.

**Top right:** Chris Taylor landscaped the grounds of the '50s ranch house with English-style formal hedges and topiaries.

**Above:** In back, Taylor's high boxwoods screen the pool and outdoor fireplace for privacy.

**Opposite:** Paisley wallpaper from England softens the dark mahogany of the four-poster bed and chest.  
**Right:** An antique chinoiserie secretary with inlaid detail displays favorite books and choice Chinese and English blue-and-white porcelains.  
**Below:** Barclay painted the original bedroom fireplace white and created a more substantial mantel. Three different materials give textural interest to the chair, an ideal perch for Carson, a short-haired dachshund.



in this house, with the dark mahogany furniture and very layered decorating approach," he concedes.

Another way of describing the design is "beach house with a twist," Barclay suggests. Instead of bleaching the floors for the look of beach sand, he had the hardwood floors stripped and stained dark for a "grounding effect," he explains. In the family room, he went up the walls an unusually high 7 feet with batten-board wainscoting, which he capped with a traditional crown molding. He painted both the wainscoting and the molding bright white. Above the high molding, he covered the remaining wall up to the white ceiling rafters with raffia, whose natural hue provides a crisp contrast to all of the white woodwork. The ceiling also visually connects to the room's nubby-textured sea-grass ottoman and club chair. "This wall treatment gives the room volume, even though the space is not that large. It draws the eye up," Barclay notes.

The unexpected wall treatment also provides insight into the designer's modus operandi—deconstructing assumptions so he can rethink spaces unencumbered. In a recent Miami show-house, he covered walls in split-bamboo wallpaper, and ceilings in mossy-green raw silk to avoid "being locked into a kitschy Florida design of bright colors or white-on-white." In a New

York loft, he defied the usual minimalism with chinoiserie wallpaper, a chocolate-striped sofa, and oversized houndstooth chairs. "I mixed great upholstery details grounded in European design with overscaled pattern for today's design. Who says city apartment has to have a stark, loft look?" he ponders.

In Newport Beach, as in all of his homes and showhouses (he no longer does residential design except in showhouses), Barclay joins old and new—a point worth noting, since it is no home can be entirely dressed in his own design. "I'm much a collections person," he acknowledges. "It's important to recognize the homeowners' heritage—what's 'his' hers—then build those elements into 'ours.' There must be some grounding pieces that don't come from a store," he insists, "but show the influence of multiple, different generations."

In his own home, the infusion of antiques begins at entry: Its French bureau once belonged to Bette Davis, an antique bamboo cabinet was a find at the Brimfield Antiques Show (one of the nation's largest and most fun antiques shows in Massachusetts). A 19th-century burnished bamboo French secretary warms his master bedroom, mixing it up with fabrics and furniture, some of which are his own design.

Though much too livable to be over the top, Barclay's home does, in fact, push the envelope in its own subtle way from its dark floors and über-high wainscoting to its wallpaper. It expresses a belief Barclay holds nearest and dearest: "There are no rules when it comes to interiors." ■

For more information, see sources on page 248.



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