

# ASHLEY GILBREATH

EXCLUSIVE

Ashley Gilbreath is a southern-based interior designer who has created a unique style that shows elegance and timeless design. Ashley studied at Auburn University and the New York School of Interior Design before working for Richard Keith Langham, creator of elegant spaces for some of New York's most legendary ladies (think Mrs. William F. Buckley and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis). Find out how she began her career and the design rules that she lives by.

By MARLA CALIGARIS



**TRADEMARK**

Richard Keith Langham's stylish and comfortable rooms are loaded with lush color, pattern, and a mix of old and new with his signature couture detailing.



Ashley Gilbreath has an eye for creating high-style interiors that exude comfort and livability. We had the honor of talking with Ashley about how she got her start, what has inspired her ever since, and what qualities she most admires in a room.

**You studied at Auburn University and the New York School of Interior Design. When did you know you wanted to be an interior de-**

**signer?** I first knew I had a passion for design when I was about eight and would decorate doll houses with my sister for hours on end. I followed my interests and went to Auburn with the intention of studying in the architectural program. At the time, I wasn't really aware that interior design was a viable option. After the first full year of studying architecture, I realized all they talked about was the outside of buildings. Beginning my junior year, I switched to the interior design program at Auburn and started to take

interior design classes at the New York School of Design.

**While we know there is no exact recipe for an Ashley Gilbreath interior, what is one design element you're known for?** In all my rooms I use at least one design element that has a history to it. I love pieces of furniture that tell a story whether it be a chair that has been in the family for years or a piece of furniture that is worn with age but that happens to be just the right color. I like rooms that look like they have been around for a while and don't look like they were taken directly from a catalog. Every space needs a sense of history and place.

**With so many design ideas available via websites, why do you still think it's important to use an interior designer?** There is no simple formula for what makes for a great design. When designing a room, you have to take into account so many elements including scale, proportion, color, texture, and materials. In order to combine these elements well, you need the right eye and training. I like to start with a large, prominent piece of furniture and build the room around that piece. By hiring an interior designer, you avoid making costly mistakes. With the expertise of a designer all the elements in a room will work together to make a warm, inviting, and functioning space to be enjoyed by all for years to come.

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**W**hat do you think makes a house a home? It's all about the feelings you get when you walk in the door.

A home must speak to the family who lives there and exude a sense of comfort. What is important about any home is that it is where a family will create a lifetime of memories. As a designer, it is an honor that I am able to create a space that will shape a family's memories. We get to be a part of creating the room where mothers remember their children and grandparents gather for Christmas. I am always aware of the fact that whatever room I design is meant to be lived in and is not meant to be a museum piece. I like families to feel like they can take off their shoes and not feel guilty if they make a mess. The ultimate measure of success is if a family feels at home in the environment that I created.

**Which design blog, website, TV show, or magazine would you be lost without?** Unfortunately, most of my television time is dedicated to Peppa Pig or simply falling asleep in front of the screen. For the same reason I admit I don't read as much as I would like. However I always find time to look thorough Veranda Magazine. The new editor is amazing! Veranda is classic, timely, and not married to one specific design style.

**What qualities do you most admire in a room?** When a good architect is on board any home project I do, you can immediately tell. It makes all the difference when you look for attention to the finest details. One thing I always look for is great millwork and moldings. I have come to appreciate the craftsmanship that goes into creating millwork because lets you know that the architect left no detail overlooked. Beautiful millwork instantly takes any home to a whole other level. My husband makes fun of me but the first thing I look at when I enter a room is if the draperies are well-made. Executing these details wells can really enhance the look and feel of a room.



Family portrait: Ashley with Cates, Rett, and Liza.

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Recently you were honored with the Shutze award from the Institute of Classical Art & Architecture. What does this award mean to you? It was an incredible honor to receive recognition for my work at the Shutze awards from The Institute of Classical Work & Architecture. I was in the same room Bunny Williams, Charlotte Moss, Suzanne Kessler whose interior design style I had admired and studied over the years. Now I was the one being given this amazing award. I was privileged to be at the same event with these amazingly talented people much less to be dignified with their recognition. **SVM**