



Always game to test new finds, designer Paul Sherrill (inset) changed the wall covering in his dining room since we photographed his Kalorama apartment for this issue. The new double-layered treatment (top and right) infuses the space with color.



PHOTO: © ZEPHYRUS JARTE

Given that designers are paid to articulate their clients' style rather than their own, it's always fascinating to see how local professionals decorate their nests. After publishing a total of 60 projects in all of our annual Designers at Home issues combined, we've discovered a thing or two about how the pros roll when they're unencumbered by a client's wants and needs.

Designers' houses typically serve as living laboratories for their creative owners, who don't shy away from making changes on a dime. Paul Sherrill's Kalorama apartment is no exception. After we photographed our feature (page 146), an electrical repair impelled him to open up a dining room wall—and, while he was at it, he decided to replace the neutral wallpaper in the space. "I realized I wanted more color," Sherrill notes. He experimented with a treatment that topped dark chocolate-colored craft paper with a soft blue linen gauze by Innovations. Despite initial trepidation about the seaming, he was pleased with the rich, tactile effect. "It has a texture to it and captures the light," he says.

With knowledge of the latest and greatest products and materials come the rewards. But narrowing down the options can be daunting considering that a designer's personal spaces speak volumes about his or her signature style. "It's easier for me to 'get' clients than it is for me to 'get' myself sometimes," admits Sandra Meyer, whose Bethesda residence featured on page 136 also graces our cover.

Meyer allowed the makeover of her home to unfold organically, without a rigid plan. "Sometimes I don't have a plan," she asserts, "but I know something will work because I love it." Her serene and inviting interiors are living proof that this approach can succeed when the instincts are right.

The right instincts, I believe, set apart all the houses featured in this, our eleventh Designers at Home issue. I hope you find them as inspiring as we do.

*Sharon Jaffe Dan*

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In his living room, Paul Sherrill (opposite) juxtaposes modern and classic elements. A trio of abstract paintings by Brazilian artist Dudu Garcia is displayed to the right of the Chesterfield sofa (pictured here).



DESIGNERS  
AT HOME



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# *Change* ARTIST

Paul Sherrill puts new design  
ideas to the test in his elegant  
Kalorama apartment

BY ALICE LECCESI POWERS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GORDON BEALL





Paul Sherrill thinks of his apartment as a lab where he often shifts art, moves rugs or subtly tweaks the palette to add rich color here or neutral tones there. "I test things out and try new things," explains the designer, a principal of the Washington-based firm Solis Betancourt & Sherrill.

What does not change is Sherrill's underlying design philosophy. "There's a unifying thread, whether a home is extremely contemporary or traditional," he explains. "It's the basic and classic elements of organization: scale and placement."

For 26 years, Solis Betancourt & Sherrill has designed residential interiors for clients from Boston to San Juan. While the firm's style defies categorization, its goal is "timeless rather than trendy," says Sherrill. "We merge classical elements harmoniously with modern to create spaces that are peaceful and elegant."

Sherrill's 1,000-square-foot Washington apartment is no exception. It's located in the Altamont, a Kalorama building with a classical pedigree. When it was built in

INTERIOR DESIGN: PAUL SHERRILL, Solis Betancourt & Sherrill, Washington, DC.



An abstract painting and a 1960s chrome Milo Baughman coffee table play off a Dutch baroque mirror above the marble mantel in Sherrill's living room (these pages). A 16th-century Flemish tapestry adorns the facing wall.





In the round dining room (these pages), a custom banquette invites guests to sit beneath the windows. Sherrill illuminates dinner parties with candles on the 19th-century Dutch-style chandelier; the Anglo-Indian linen press is packed with dishes for entertaining. The bedroom fireplace is visible from the dining room.



## “I love 70s modern mixed with Renaissance.” —PAUL SHERRILL

1916, the Altamont promised city life on a grand scale with four-bedroom units, 10-foot ceilings and servants' quarters. It boasted a café, loggia, roof garden, billiard room, beauty parlor and barber shop. In the 1920s, the apartments were subdivided into smaller ones and in 1949 the building converted to co-op. Today, the Altamont still retains its stately reception rooms, dignified front desk, and ornate, manually operated elevator.

In Sherrill's home, three grand rooms—living room, dining room and bedroom—flow one into the other, unified but separate. Along with the 10-foot ceilings, other architectural details give the home interesting bones, from the round dining room with soaring windows to the wood-burning fireplaces, one in the living room and one in the bedroom, that punctuate the apartment like parentheses.

Sherrill's living room is an experiment in scale, style and provenance. It's divided into two distinct seating areas, one to the left of the fireplace and the other at a di-

agonal to the wall of windows to “break up the symmetry,” he says. Anchoring the space is a custom sisal carpet, its informality a contrast to the dramatic floor-to-ceiling draperies.

Modern and traditional elements blend in a surprising alliance. “I love 1970s modern mixed with Renaissance,” admits Sherrill. A large, abstract painting hangs over a Donghia sofa; in front of the sofa rests a 1960s chrome Milo Baughman coffee table. Matching Lucite consoles from Desiron flank the fireplace, which is topped by an ebonized, 19th-century Dutch baroque mirror. A Chesterfield sofa is paired with a 200-year-old red wingback chair from Ireland that belonged to a dancer in the American Ballet Theatre. Hung directly on a window, an 18th-century Italian landscape by an unknown artist, says Sherrill, “creates a nice view where one does not exist.”

In the round dining room, another seating area is tucked beneath the window bay. He commissioned Designer Workroom in Bethesda to fabricate the curved ban-

quette and draperies using fabrics by S. Harris. When not set for a dinner party, the round gateleg table in the center of the room is layered with textiles and art objects. A nearby Anglo-Indian linen press stores dishware under a collection of Tiffany plates hung on the wall. A candle chandelier provides the only overhead lighting in the space.

Sherrill credits his North Carolina childhood as an early aesthetic influence. “I always loved going to the Vanderbilt mansion [in Asheville],” he recalls. “Perhaps my bedroom is an allusion to that.” Visible from the dining room and separated by a set of French doors, the bedroom features a marble fireplace mantel flanked by enormous Mexican wardrobes made in San Miguel de Allende. Near the windows is an English refectory table, an ad hoc workspace for a laptop.

Inspiration from the Biltmore Estate is evident in Sherrill's dramatic bed. The headboard is a Venetian overdoor of hand-carved gilt wood depicting the





North Wind. Above it is a ceiling-height, flame-stitched canopy and at its foot, an ornately detailed trunk. As in other rooms, art is hung salon-style.

After a decade in his home, Sherrill is still trying new ideas. "The biggest thing that I learned was that I'm never here during the day; I only experience it at night," he says of the evolving design. "So I started bringing in richer, vibrant color. Most of the lighting is low or just candlelight."

He loves to entertain but admits that he doesn't cook, joking that his closet-sized kitchen is just big enough "to open a bottle of Champagne."

During parties, he points out, "guests can enjoy views of the fireplaces from the living and dining rooms. It's an alley of spaces; you experience one space, then another. It's both a procession and a decompression, as the spaces reveal themselves." ♦

*Alice Leccese Powers is a Washington, DC, writer. Photographer Gordon Beall is based in Bethesda.*

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In the bedroom, Sherrill's ornate headboard (top) was fabricated from a Venetian overdoor topped by a canopy with fabric by Kravet. Two wingback chairs flank an 18th-century refectory table (above). "Divide," a contemporary painting by Washington-area artist Jacqui Crocetta, hangs over the fireplace (opposite). The light fixture is Venetian.

