



Fran says that one of her design signatures is a dark, cozy dining room. "My own dining room is black!" she says. "I do love that it makes guests linger and is conducive to long conversations."

Design Counselor

Fran Keenan's background in fashion and fabric design weighs in on each of her projects, bringing to life her interior design signature—the masterful mix.

Text by LACEY HOWARD / Photography by JEAN ALLSOPP

Fran Keenan loves to help other people solve design problems. "I almost went into counseling in college," she says. And sometimes, her role as interior decorator isn't too far removed from the therapeutic profession. "I enjoy working with husbands and wives who don't see eye to eye," she explains. Fran says that "when he loves hard-core modern and she loves all things French," it's her job to step in and help negotiate. Her ultimate goal is to create a great *mélange* of a couple's tastes when, at the beginning, each was ready to fight for what he or she wanted. Helping couples find a look that satisfies both of them, she says, "is very inspiring to me."





"When I'm working on a traditional house, it is fun to use an ethnic fabric, such as the one on the living room drapes," says Fran. "It lightens mood and makes house the feel more youthful. Modern art does the same thing. If you have an English Tudor and you feel it with English botanicals, its going to feel pretty stodgy!"

Inspired is an apt description of Fran's work. Rather than relying on a signature look or style, Fran finds inspiration from her clients in each design project. She also draws on her past experiences designing for Tommy Hilfiger, Polo, and Diamond Baratta Design. "When I start on a project, I always inquire about what inspires my clients. It could even be your grandmother's vase that you don't know why you love," Fran says. She often asks to see a favorite dress that belongs to the client or even a favorite piece of jewelry. "We start with a point of reference so I can get inside the client's head. I love hearing what inspires people, why they respond to a color, why they want to live the way they do." The details Fran gleans from this Q&A process become the driving force behind the overall project.

For this particular interior design plan, Fran knew that the homeowners are embedded in the music industry and also have a love of antiques. As she approached the project, she asked herself, "How do we combine those things in a way that makes antique Italian items edgier and creates a mix to feel sharp and more raw? We wanted something really cool, but we wanted it to also feel timeless."

Although every newly designed interior varies wildly from the last, Fran says there are a few threads that connect her projects: antiques in every space, plenty of color, and a play of pattern. But it's the antiques that seem to take the largest role in Fran's masterful mix. "I have a really hard time working in a room without anything old," she says.



In Fran's opinion, color and pattern—whether a striped, upholstered wall or a bright, snappy kitchen color—are the elements of design that add interest to a home, pulling visitors through the house. "I am determined to make each space really special with color, pattern, and texture. All-white walls? Let's add a colored ceiling or a bleached floor," she says. "It's the same idea with clothes: Khaki pants are great, but they look best with a pink shirt. Otherwise things get a little ho-hum." Details such as contrasting trims are not overlooked in Fran's mix either. "I sweat all the details, and I love them! That comes from my fashion background. The importance of trim or a button on a coat is the same as that of the trim on a lampshade," she says.

That attention to detail is also part of what makes Fran's designs so successful, especially for couples who disagree over whether their home should be in the wife's style or the husband's. And when the project is complete, Fran says, her greatest compliment is, "This looks like us!"

resources: interiors: [FRAN KEENAN DESIGN](#), 205.821.8131 dining room: wall color: [DOWNPIPE, FARROW & BALL](#) us.farrow-ball.com painting: [AMY PLEASANT](#) amypleasant.com dining table: [CIRCA INTERIORS AND ANTIQUES](#) 205.868.9199 living room: Italian demilune table: [ROBUCK ANTIQUES](#), 404.351.7173 Oval Table, lantern, sofa: [CIRCA INTERIORS AND ANTIQUES](#) drapery: [JASPER COLLECTION BY MICHAEL SMITH](#) michaelsmithinc.com foyer: wall and drapery fabric: [JASPER COLLECTION BY MICHAEL SMITH](#) Foo dog lamp: [THE NEST](#) 205.870.1264 Kraven vase: [TABLE MATTERS](#) 205.879.0125 photograph of Keith Richards: [AMW, INC. PHOTOGRAPHY GALLERY](#) 205.870.3588

"I think antiques give a *timelessness to a room that nothing else can*. No matter how modern a room's design is, I still want some old things. They don't have to be 19th century Italianate relics. Items just need to have *enough age that they have some soul*."

—Fran Keenan

"Any time you can wrap a room in fabric the style quotient triples!" Fran says of this entry where she upholstered the walls and crafted window treatments from a ticking stripe. "It is so luxurious and feels so warm and inviting. Fabric really is the ultimate wall covering. The look is so timeless and stylish."

