



**Carleton Varney**, one of America's best known interior designers, is associated with the restoration and decoration of countless hotels and resorts all over the world. He is the president of Dorothy Draper & Co. Inc. (New York) the oldest established interior design firm in the United States, named after the founder of the company who was one of the doyennes of interior design from the 1920's to the 1960's and who was honored by the Museum of the City of New York last year in a very successful retrospective exhibition of her work. He has continued her work with the bold design style she would be proud of.

**Big Patterns, Bright Colors**  
**Don't Be Afraid — Take A Lesson From Dorothy Draper.**

**By Kimberly Merritt**

The Astors, the Vanderbilts and the Rockefellers — during the early 1900s, they and many others in the smart set used the Mt. Washington Hotel in Bretton Woods as their summer playground. They were drawn there by the elegance of the hotel and its breathtaking views.

Over the years, changing hands, the grand dame gradually faded and in 1991 was put up for auction. A group of New Hampshire businesspeople bought it; they were determined to restore it to its former glory.

Walk into a room on the hotel's second floor — the Dorothy Draper room — and you can instantly see the restoration is well on its way. You find yourself awash in color and pattern that is bold and beautiful. It is the work of world-renowned interior designer Carleton Varney, president/owner of Dorothy Draper and Co. in New York City.

Founded by the famed doyenne of interior design Dorothy Draper, the company — the oldest interior design firm in the country — has been involved in the redesign of many noted properties and resorts the world over — The Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, the Greenbrier Hotel in West Virginia and The Breakers in Palm Beach among them.

Starting her design work in the 1920s, Draper rejected the dowdy color schemes and typical interiors of the Edwardian era, and instead designed her rooms with a combination of vibrant colors, vivid patterns and bold contrasts that were to become her signature. To her, color was the most important aspect of interior design. Varney notes, "She felt people reacted to color and were less content if they lived in a colorless world."

Draper also advised her followers to "jumble periods cheerfully," which allowed novice interior decorators the freedom to experiment without restrictions.

Since joining the company in 1962, Varney has carried on Draper's design vision and added his own touches. A Varney room is both, colorful and comfortable — never drab. He loves dramatic shapes and

bold colors, all while creating a traditional, elegant interior. He says his goal was to give the hotel great presence and bring a “new sense of color to the resort.”



Everything Draper is evident in this room. The mix of color and pattern makes a bold statement. From the aqua on the walls to the red carpet underfoot — it’s a feast for the senses.

Inspired by the lovely blue shades found at Monticello and Mount Vernon, Varney wanted to add “magical colors to the hotel — and not your usual browns and beiges.”

The spacious guest bedroom he designed features a king-sized bed and a comfortable sitting area in front of a fireplace, adorned with a black-and-white photograph of Draper herself over the mantel.

The room is blanketed in a bold floral found in the sofa, drapes and bed canopy. This beautiful print is called Fazenda Lilly — from Varney’s own line of fabrics — and blends together a mix of red, green, blue and purple flowers and leaves.

Varney says a guest should always feel special: “When people often went to hotels, the feeling was that of home. The environment Dorothy wanted to create was for the person to remember exactly what the room they stayed in looked like.”

This room makes quite an impression, indeed. The white poster bed has its canopy dressed in more Fazenda Lilly and is lined in a paler shade of aqua.

Varney says Draper loved white poster beds with canopies. “Beds are special — more than just a box spring and headboard.” The bedding is 100 percent white cotton piqué with red banding that accentuates the rich, red carpet.

The Pratesi sheets are also a pale aqua, but Varney suggests, “Dorothy could have chosen pink, light blue or a soft green and been just as happy.”

The furnishings arranged by the fireplace include a curved sofa (in the same Fazenda Lilly), two club chairs and a cocktail table that coordinates with the other tables in the room. This cozy setting is ideal for a fireside supper for two.

In the corner of the room sits a recessed tub done in black marble with a view of the fireplace and the outdoors. The bathroom has bold black and white tiles set on the diagonal. A Draper room wouldn't be complete without a touch of black. Crisp white and splashes of black are another Draper signature.

In his work for the hotel, Varney also restored the ballroom in shades of white, gold and black this past summer, and is currently working on the design for the demilune-shaped conservatory. The room will feature shades of purple and lilac, reminiscent of the state flower, with hints of aqua. The room will be outfitted in white wicker furniture for what Varney calls a “fresh, country garden look.”

Attention has been given to the smallest detail. The veranda's seating was replaced with red rockers (and in the warm weather, hanging baskets of red geraniums) to complement the hotel's trademark red roof — a simple, yet subtle example of the Varney touch.

There is more work to be done. Varney will be back to Bretton Woods to bring more of what one writer calls “the big, brash, bodacious and bold” Draper style to the elegant old hotel.

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Carlton Varney is the author of more than 20 books including *The Draper Touch – The High Life and High Style of Dorothy Draper*, *In the Pink* and *Houses in my Heart*. To learn more please visit <http://dorothydraper.com>

For information about the Fazenda Lilly fabric used at the Mt. Washington, visit <http://carletonvarneybytheyard.com>

To learn more about The Dorothy Draper Collection from Kindel Furniture, visit <http://kindelfurniture.com>