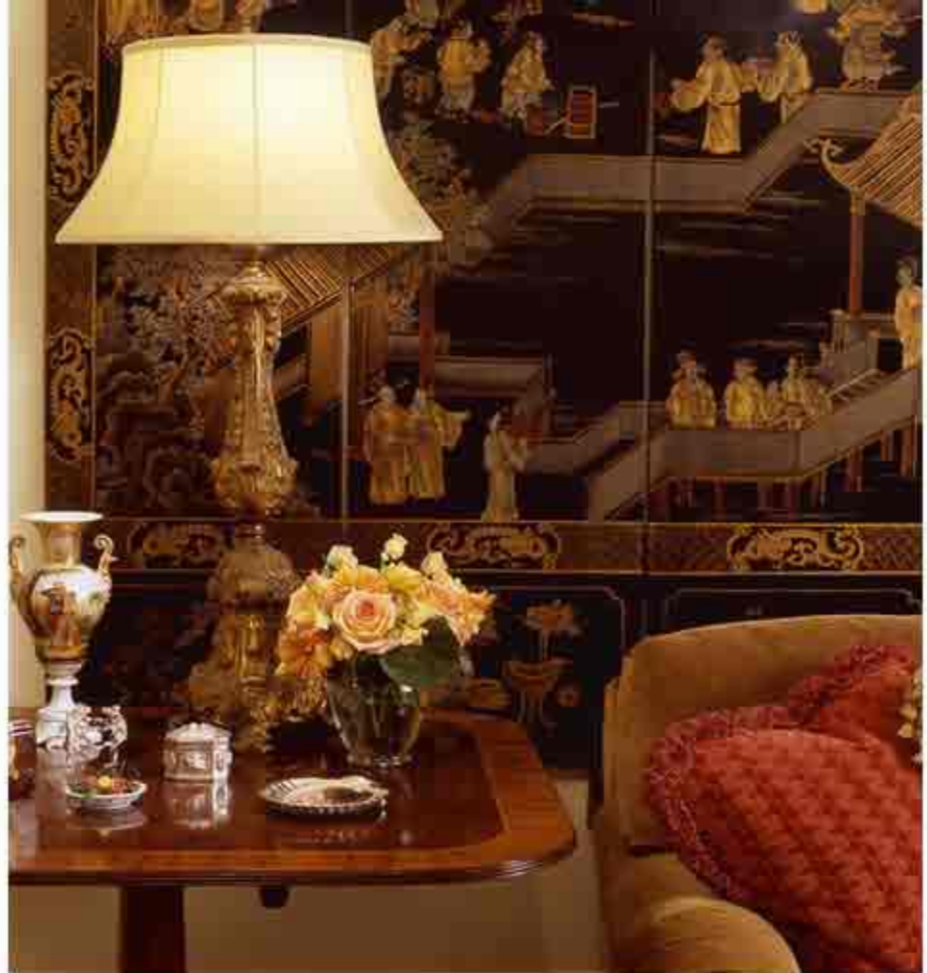




LEFT In this family room, John mixed rich colors and textures to achieve his signature clean-lined traditional look.

RIGHT A coromandel screen makes a dramatic backdrop for a vignette including antique urns and altar lamp.



JOHN BANKS

John S. Banks Interiors

John Banks has a classical grounding. He grew up in Eutaw, Alabama, in what he describes as an "American colonial house with columns in the front" and a traditional interior. And here in Georgia he considers the Swan House, with its exquisite Italianate detailing, the most impressive house around.

Still, one interior that remains a lasting inspiration for John is at the cool, Asian-contemporary Millenium Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Singapore. It has clean lines and cutting edge art, and was designed by feng shui masters. "It was fascinating to me," he recalls. "So cutting edge. Beautiful pieces, with a minimalist feel. But very comfortable."

These two sensibilities might seem at odds. But they come together in John's work to produce spaces that are at once traditional and clean-lined - and always comfortable and warm. He'll bring in contemporary

John's favorite kind of project is to redo an existing house, creating an entirely new environment within it, and a new lifestyle for its owners.

"I love going in and using their things to update it. We don't just throw things away and start from scratch, because it's not our house, or a show house; it has to have the clients' stamp on it."

John admits to being extremely particular, but he's also easygoing and calm. No wonder his favorite color is green - or that he's so adept at interpreting his clients' desires.

ABOVE RIGHT A bright Brunswick & Fils print makes this living room not only dressy but casually inviting.

BELOW RIGHT The hues in a portrait of the client's son are echoed here in fabrics from Brunswick & Fils and Cowtan and Tout.



More about John ...

WHERE DO YOU FIND INSPIRATION?

From traveling, and experiencing interesting hotels and restaurants. If money were no object, I would take a trip around the world.

WHAT'S THE BEST PART OF BEING AN INTERIOR DESIGNER?

Meeting and working with different people.

WHAT'S YOUR OWN HOUSE LIKE?

It's like a Highlands house in the city - of stone and cedar in a wooded setting, with big beams in the living room and lots of glass. It's filled with English antiques and a few contemporary pieces, and my collections of Imari and blue and white porcelain and antique walking sticks.

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touches, especially through art, and use unexpected fabrics on traditional furniture. A mixture of styles helps him express a client's personality.

John cultivated his aesthetic with plenty of family support. "Both of my grandmothers had great taste and were interested in design; I picked up a lot from them," he explains. After earning a bachelor's degree in interior design from the University of Mississippi, his father encouraged him to do graduate work. He came to do that at the Art Institute of Atlanta - and the rest, as they say, is history.

Communication with clients is at the top of John's agenda. "I try to find out what is really comfortable for them, and what they think is the epitome of a beautiful room." These early conversations can sometimes reveal that a couple has divergent visions, and so John is called upon to negotiate the compromises. "I just put my guard down and get to know them as friends. It's important that they trust me," he says, but he's no dictator. He always makes a point, for instance, of presenting clients with multiple choices, and eliciting their views.



LEFT In this charming breakfast room, John reflected his client's vibrant personality and love of color.

ABOVE A McGuire table and chairs, rich textures and Indonesian accents give this kitchen its casual warmth.