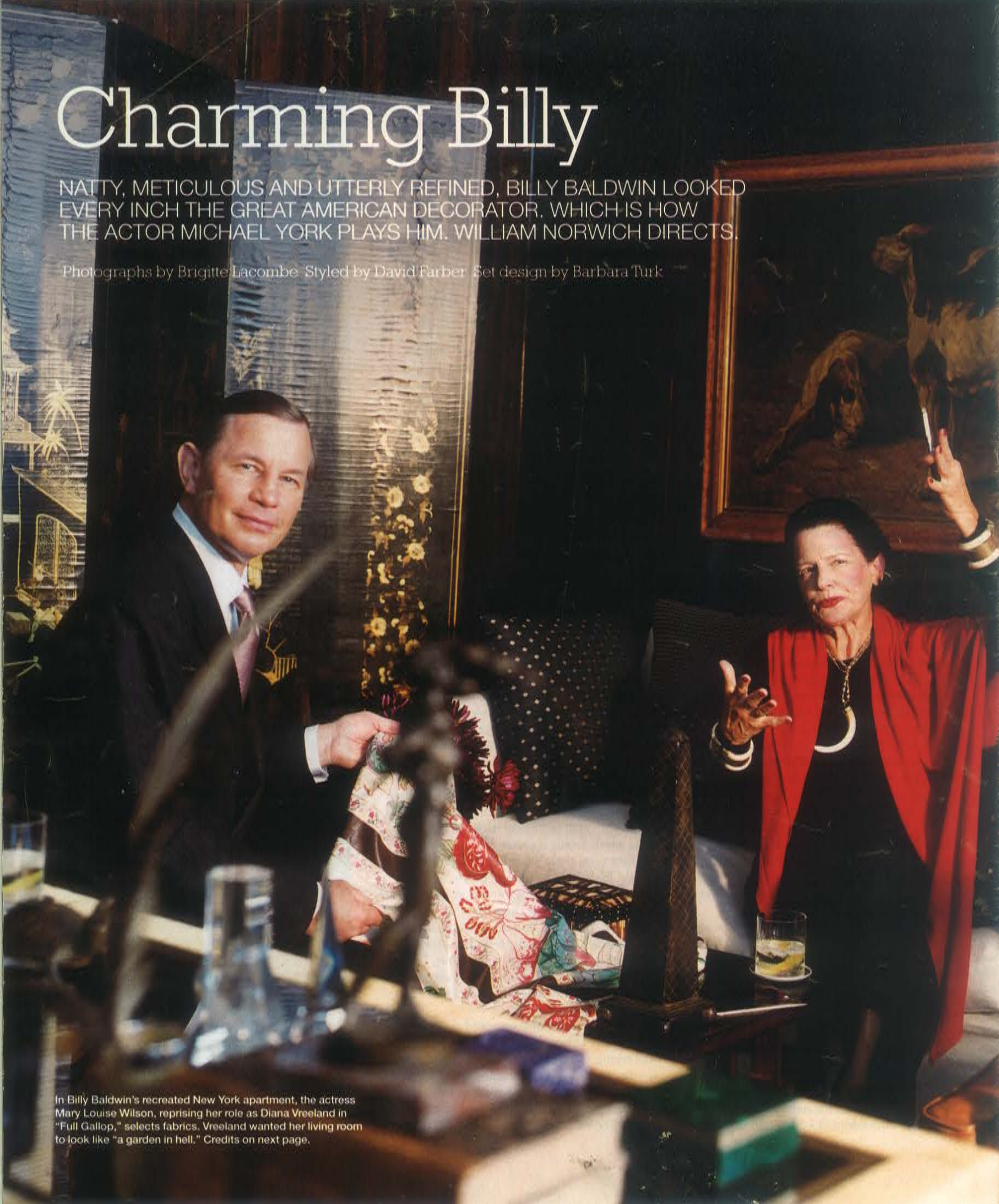


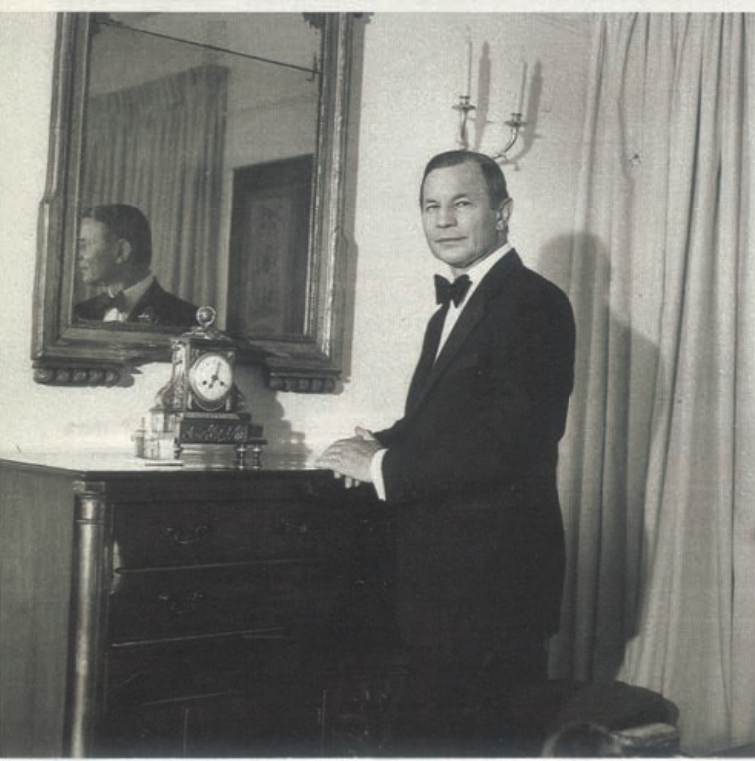
Charming Billy

NATTY, METICULOUS AND UTTERLY REFINED, BILLY BALDWIN LOOKED EVERY INCH THE GREAT AMERICAN DECORATOR. WHICH IS HOW THE ACTOR MICHAEL YORK PLAYS HIM. WILLIAM NORWICH DIRECTS.

Photographs by Brigitte Lacombe Styled by David Farber Set design by Barbara Turk



In Billy Baldwin's recreated New York apartment, the actress Mary Louise Wilson, reprising her role as Diana Vreeland in "Full Gallop," selects fabrics. Vreeland wanted her living room to look like "a garden in hell." Credits on next page.



Scenes of Baldwin at home. From top: pinstriped merino wool suit, \$3,000, Egyptian cotton sport shirt, \$205, and tie at Oxxford, 36 East 57th Street. Boots, Cole Haan. Cane table, Bielecky Brothers. Brass crab, wood crab and bronze diver statue courtesy of Linda Horn. Planter, Naga Antiques. Bronze statue and malachite box, Malmaison Antiques. Sport jacket, \$995, Polo by Ralph Lauren. Trousers, \$410, Ralph Lauren Purple Label. Both at Polo Ralph Lauren stores. Cashmere shirt, \$995, Brioni. At Barneys New York. Van Day Truex landscape courtesy of Harry Hinson. Billy Baldwin slipper chair and love seat, Ventry Ltd. Fabric, Henry Calvin at Donghia. Slipcovers and pillows, Mark David Interiors. Brass lobster courtesy of Linda Horn. Wool tuxedo, \$1,395, and shirt, \$185, Canali. At Bloomingdale's nationwide. Saks Fifth Avenue. Bow tie, Canali. Louis XVI mirror and Louis XVI *secrétaire*, Dalva Brothers. Brass sconce on wall and Régence chairs, Malmaison Antiques. Cotton duck curtains, Dazian.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL US, WE KNOW: Michael York is at least three times, all right, four times taller than the late, great decorator Billy Baldwin, but never mind. We are here to praise Billy Baldwin, not clone him.

High style is back in men's fashion, and Baldwin's particular brand of modernism — a snappy, sartorial splendor he perfected along with his significantly spare, but always classic, interior design work — was evident in many of the recent collections. Dressed-down Fridays are so last season. Suddenly, formality — yes, a tie and a jacket, fine wool, tweed, silks and polished shoes — is news again.

Especially the way Baldwin did it, making clothes look easy and attractive and, most of all, comfortable, dressing much the same way he decorated. As you might detect from our sets, inspired by rooms that Baldwin decorated for himself in New York and on Nantucket, European influences were distilled through a crisp and efficient American filter. "We can recognize and give credit where credit is due," Baldwin said, "to the debt of taste we owe Europe, but we have taste, too."

Infused with optimism in the years after World War II, Baldwin believed American style could be victorious around the globe. His clients included Bunny and Paul Mellon, Babe and Bill Paley, Nan Kempner, Jacqueline and Aristotle Onassis, Mary and Harding Lawrence and Diana Vreeland — just a few of the people who sought his exuberance and expertise. Responding to Vreeland's request to make her Park Avenue living room into "a garden, but a garden in hell," Baldwin found a scarlet chintz with brilliant Persian flowers at John Fowler's shop in London and made it fun.

"He was, to use his favorite word, the most attractive person anyone could imagine," the decorator Mark Hampton observed in 1992. "Unlike many of the chic and famous, he never conveyed that threat of boredom lying just below the surface. He loved luxury, but he abhorred conspicuous richness. His aim was to be stylish at all times, but trendy vulgarity could not have been more remote from his work. He had the instincts of a modernist, but the framework within which he worked was classical and traditional."

When asked why he became a decorator, Baldwin would point to his genteel childhood in Baltimore — also the home of his two chums, the Duchess of Windsor and Pauline de Rothschild. His father, a successful insurance executive, was a clotheshorse of whom Baldwin was in awe, especially when he watched his father groom himself in his elaborate dressing room. Many of his father's clothes — his hats and canes, umbrellas and monogrammed white linen handkerchiefs — came from an English tailor named Barnes. His shoes were custom made by Peel of London. Such was his father's penchant for new clothes that when he died in the mid-1920's, there were 24 new or almost new suits in his closet and nothing in the bank, because, as Baldwin put it, "it was all spent on his own peacock joy."

Baldwin's mother sold the family house, staffed with eight servants, and moved the family into an apartment. Always upbeat, Baldwin rarely discussed his nostalgia for his first home, but his feelings became evident in his career choice. After working for a few years in a decorating firm in his hometown, he became an assistant to the legendary New York decorator Ruby Ross Wood, a Southern lady with manners similar to his own. Baldwin was now on his way.

As he became more and more successful, Baldwin dressed the part of the great arbiter, often in clothes by the British designer Hardy Amies. "I loved clothes, although I did not inherit the extreme passion for them that my father had had," he told his biographer Michael Gardine. Clothes interested Baldwin because they "were going to be worn in the rooms that I was working on." And just like his rooms, he preferred things that were "simple, becoming and lovely to the touch." ■





In his Nantucket cottage, Laidwin loved white slipcovers for their ability to hide a multitude of decorating sins. Sweater, \$1,595, and trousers, \$495, Giorgio Armani Men's Classico. At Giorgio Armani boutiques. Ascot, Robert Talbott Shoes, J.M. Weston. Van Day Truex owl drawing courtesy of Albert Hadley. Van Day Truex landscape courtesy of Harry Hinson. Lamps, Cedric Hartman. Billy Baldwin chair and tuxedo love seat, Ventry Ltd. Fabric on love seat and chair, Henry Calvin at Donghia. Pillow fabrics, Bergamo and Hinson & Company. All pillows and

slipcovers from Mark David Interiors. Tables and tea service, Mafmaison Antiques. Sisal rug, Beauvais Carpets.

Hair and makeup: Regina Harris for L'Atelier NYC. Tailoring: Curtis Garrett and Keko Cheng. Hair for Mary Louise Wilson: Bettie O. Rogers. Manicurist: Maria for Warren-Tricomi Salon. Fashion assistant: Bronagh Maguire.

Set construction by Composition Workshop. Floral design: Sebastian Li. Set design assistants: Carrie Gjermundsen and Michael Niklaus.

Footnotes RESOURCES, REFERENCES AND THE BACK STORY BEHIND THE STORY.



1. Unlike his father, Billy Baldwin was not especially extravagant when it came to his clothes, although his smallish size required special tailoring. As a result, he always looked great, like "a small but exquisite jewel," a friend once said, as this photograph taken in his New York apartment attests. One of Baldwin's admitted shopping sprees occurred at Saks Fifth Avenue when his favorite tailor, Mr. Schantz, showed him some particularly fine, wrinkleproof navy blue flannel. Without asking the price, Baldwin immediately ordered a pair of bathing trunks in the cloth, as well as a blazer, a couple of pullover shirts and several pairs of trousers. "They lasted forever," Baldwin later recalled. "I wore them all the time in all the summer places I went."

2. Michael York, explaining the mysteries of decorating to Tiffany Dubin during our shoot. Dubin's boutique just opened at Henri Bendel. York, on the other hand, admits: "I'm not a great shopper. As an actor you spend so much time in costume, you have no need to make a fashion statement." York, who can be seen this fall in "Megiddo," the sequel to "The Omega Code," never met Baldwin, although, he says, "I was certainly aware of him." Before York married his wife, the photographer Patricia York, in 1968, "she was engaged to someone for whom Baldwin had decorated an apartment." An author and lecturer on Shakespeare, York was thoroughly mod in 60's London, wearing velvet Tommy Nutter suits. Now he dresses more like Baldwin: "Classic, and elegant — at least I hope so," he says.

3. Depending on which way the latest trends blow, classic-and-elegant comes and goes in most high-fashion collections. Instant Billy Baldwin? Dolce & Gabbana, especially this suit (a). Billy Baldwin in a spritz? Penhaligon's Blenheim Bouquet (b), \$64, from Saks Fifth



Avenue, generously applied (Baldwin didn't sport a heavy cologne because of respiratory ailments). Penhaligon, by the way, has long been the come-hither-by-commission spray of fancy male decorators everywhere.



4. A sister-in-law of the actress Mary Louise Wilson worked for Diana Vreeland and told some great stories. But it wasn't until Wilson saw this photograph (a) of the living room that Baldwin decorated for Mrs. Vreeland that the idea crystallized for "Full Gallop," Wilson's one-woman show, in which she so splendidly channels the great lady of fashion. Wilson will star later this fall in the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Clare Booth Luce's comedy "The Women." Directed by Scott Elliott, with costumes by Isaac Mizrahi, the show opens on Nov. 8 at the American Airlines Theater. Meanwhile, Wilson's Vreeland wig (b), perched on a lacquer stacking box from Niall Smith, (212) 255-0660, is standing by for when she films "Full Gallop" for television, she hopes, sometime next year.

5. Van Day Truex, the late head of the Parsons School of Design and the design director of Tiffany & Company, is like a god

in the decorating world. He designed the Parsons table, and examples of his artwork (a) were kindly lent for this shoot by Albert Hadley and Harry Hinson. For more on the great man of style, Adam Lewis's new book, "Van Day Truex: The Man Who Defined



20th-Century Taste and Style" (b), will be published by Viking Studio in November.

6. Baldwin said, "Books are our constant companions and our best friends." He liked them with their jackets off. The books displayed in this article — jackets on, in most cases — were provided by Jane Stubbs, (212) 228-

0826, who curates private libraries and sells great out-of-print books at her shop at Bergdorf Goodman.

How else to get the Billy Baldwin look? Consider pieces from Bilhuber Basics, the home-furnishings line by the Baldwin devotee Jeffrey Bilhuber, (212) 308-4888. Some of Baldwin's designs, like this slipper chair, are still available from Billy Baldwin Studio (732) 872-7300. The floor lamp is from Cedric Hartman (402) 344-4474. — William Norwich

Van Day Truex

*The Man Who Defined
Twentieth-Century
Taste and Style*

ADAM LEWIS
Illustrated by Albert Hadley

5b.