

LIVING IN PARADISE

SARASOTA[®] MAGAZINE

**WEDDING OF
THE YEAR**

**CIRCUS
GREATS DOLLY
JACOBS AND
PEDRO REIS
CELEBRATE
THEIR VOWS.**

**AT HOME IN D.C.
WITH CONGRESSMAN
VERN AND SANDY
BUCHANAN**

**EAT LOCALLY: BEST
ARTISANAL FOODS**

**PLUS
OF
A
AL WORK
ATION PITS
ATTERBOX AGAINST
SARASOTA.**

Featuring
HDA Hughes Design Associates

high style Sanctuary

AFTER DESIGNING
RESIDENCES AND HOTELS
ALL OVER THE WORLD,
PAMELA HUGHES
RECHARGES IN HER
SARASOTA RETREAT.

BY CAROL TISCH

When internationally RENOWNED INTERIOR DESIGNER

Pamela Hughes unlocks the door to her Sarasota pied-à-terre, her persona is magically transformed. She's no longer viewing every object and room from the exacting perspective of how it will work for a client; for once, these rooms and furnishings are not about some other person or time. This is her personal oasis, a tranquil retreat she has created as antithesis, perhaps antidote, to the highly charged world of her booming career.

"As a designer, I am bombarded with color, fabric and images, which at the end of the day begin to converge," Hughes explains in the monochromatic living room of her home in a golf-course community. "I wanted this to be a rest for the eyes." The two-story, light-filled residence epitomizes a laid-back elegance that mirrors Hughes' personal style: chic, classic and modern without any hard edges.





Pamela Hughes



COOL, CALM, COLLECTED Pamela Hughes lives in a world of international high-style design, so she wanted her own Sarasota home to be soothing and serene.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GENE POLLUX



CLEAN AND SIMPLE In the dining room, Hughes juxtaposed dark wenge wood furniture of her own design with creamy upholstered chairs. The painting is by Sarasota artist David Steiner.

"I LOVE WHAT I CALL
SOFT MODERN—
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That same personality defines her firm, Hughes Design Associates. With offices in Sarasota and McLean, Va., she has a staff of designers working on several residential and hospitality jobs concurrently. The firm has designed myriad luxury residences and top properties, from a number of Ritz-Carlton hotels to the Inn on Biltmore Estate in Asheville, N.C., to The Mayflower in Washington, D.C., and the Four Seasons Hotel in Philadelphia.

Hughes oversees every project, and she emphasizes that each design is unique, based on influences that range from a homeowner's personality, taste and lifestyle to a hotel's history, clientele and sense of place.

Indeed, Hughes' chameleonlike ability to straddle contemporary and historic design (as well as residential and five-star hospitality projects) is what brought her to Sarasota in the first place. That talent, and her reputation for creating interiors of luxury and comfort, appealed to her first local client: The Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota. A commission to design the hotel's public spaces, guest rooms and suites segued into designing the public spaces at The Tower Residences, and then to working on The Ritz-Carlton Members Beach Club on Lido Beach.

"When the hotel was finished, I didn't want to leave," Hughes confesses. "I had met a wonderful group of friends." One of those friends was Michael Saunders, who devised a plan to tie Hughes more closely to Sarasota. The real estate mogul invited Hughes and the man who is now her significant other to Selby Gardens' Orchid Ball—then introduced the pair and sat them together. The rest is romantic history. "Michael Saunders mischievously convinced us both to go to an event neither of us otherwise would have been sure to attend," Hughes recalls.

Now Hughes is happily creating upscale interiors for residences throughout Sarasota County. "My focus has changed from hotels to residential design, which is where my career started," she

explains. "Working on clients' homes is so much more personal: I love that my clients become my friends."

The designer's diversity is apparent in a portfolio of Sarasota projects that

includes a recently completed home on Lido Shores, several glamorous downtown penthouses, and two current projects, an Addison Mizner-inspired mansion and a Georgian-style waterfront home.

But Hughes has drawn a line in the sand when it comes to her own home's décor. "Personally, I love what I call soft modern," she explains. "I use few pieces of furniture, but they are large in scale. The look is serene, uncluttered and easy." Hughes notices that more clients are trending away from over-design and moving in this direction. "People want to simplify their lives and their surroundings," she says.

Still, Hughes Design Associates continues to provide the gamut, from cutting-edge modern to traditional and historical. "We do anything as long as it is top quality," she says. Indeed, the firm is a design industry force in historical work; perhaps their most prestigious assignment, the design of the new Cloister at Sea Island in Georgia, was completed last year.

In contrast to her Sarasota home's Zen-like combination of clean-lined, dark wenge wood furniture and off-white upholstery, Hughes' design for The Cloister is all about historically accurate color, pattern, materials and restoration. "I'm proud of what we did at The Cloister," Hughes says of the project, which has been featured in *Architectural Digest*, *Veranda*, *Southern Living* and more. "It is one of the best resorts in all of North America: a beautiful, luxurious, gorgeous place."

Hughes scoured the globe for sources capable of bringing her custom designs for the hotel to life, finding artisans who could create exquisite fabrics, fringes, chandeliers, furniture and area rugs evocative of the 1920s Age of Elegance. "I didn't want anything I did to look like it came out of a furniture ad," she says. "Custom design is why our work looks so unique and so personal." That's true for

“PEOPLE WANT
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**GETTING
PERSONAL**

Hughes relies on a palette of off-white and warm, natural fibers in the living room, left, and the breakfast nook, above. She surrounds herself with treasured art, much of it by family members.

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Her own home also exudes the special allure of custom work. Hughes personally designed nearly every piece of wood furniture

and upholstery, as well as the Italian bed linens from her collection for Casa del Bianco, a company she became involved with when renovating guest rooms for New York's Pierre Hotel.

At home, Hughes' calm, neutral space is the essence of "less is more." It invites relaxation, and becomes a canvas for art. "I can't live in a space without art," she declares, pointing out some of her favorites. She loves the work of David Steiner of Sarasota's State of the Arts Gallery and commissioned one of his paintings for her dining room.

But most of Hughes' art is by family members. Her cousin, Alison Hill, a portrait artist living on Monhegan Island, Maine, created the original pastel that hangs in Hughes' dressing room. The wall over her fireplace is graced by a painting by the renowned Theodore Tihansky, Hill's husband and a devotee of noted American realist Edward Hopper.

Other cousins are Suzanne Hill of Concord, Mass., a well-known ceramist, and Melanie Hill of Newport, R.I., a jewelry designer. Their creations are also prized possessions. And Hughes' mother, Suzanne Wright of Nokomis, has contributed pastel sketches and watercolors to her daughter's home. "Art runs in the family," Hughes says. "When I was in college, I was an abstract expressionist painter and sold through a gallery in Washington, D.C. I loved it, but haven't painted in 20 years. When I am 90, I plan to start again. Until then I'll continue designing beautiful homes for wonderful people—that is my true passion." ■

SOFT MODERN

Pamela Hughes defines the style.

Serenity. The environmental balance of feng shui is recalled in uncluttered interiors. "I don't own anything unless it is beautiful or useful."

Comfort. Furniture has soft edges, clean lines, nothing sharp or angular. Seating arrangements promote conversation and traffic flow.

Neutral colors. Whites, creams and other neutral tones are mandatory background colors. "One room can be different; perhaps red or camel walls."

Crafts. Artisan-quality crafted accessories (ceramics, hand wrought metal, contemporary glass pieces) lend a human touch and softer feel.

Scale. Soft modern is achieved with fewer pieces of furniture and artworks that are large in scale. Small pieces of art are grouped to form larger units.

SUITE RETREAT The crisp aqua and white Italian bed linens are from the collection Hughes designed for Casa del Bianco.

