

# calming influence

## DARRYL CARTER IS THE NEW TRADITIONAL

Washington, D.C., designer Darryl Carter is known for his seamless blend of modern elements and classic antiques against a neutral backdrop, resulting in a home awash in calm.

Writer: Jeanne Blackburn Photography courtesy of: Thomasville

**You made a belated career change from law to design. What lessons did you learn from that transition?** The business of design is perhaps misunderstood in that it is thought to be purely driven by creativity. In reality, much of successful design is reliant upon information, management of the crafts and trade business, plus an ever-volleying psychology that results in a trusting relationship with the client. One lesson I have derived over the course of growing my business is the value of my analytical training as a lawyer, which arms me with the capacity to view conversations from both sides. This, in concert with my penchant for the creative, maintains an open mind.

**Does an interest in history account for your preference for classically inspired furniture?** I would not characterize myself as a history buff because this would imply knowledge far beyond my own. I am absolutely intrigued with history as it relates to the evolution of design, both in terms of the utility and the aesthetic. Much of my furniture design is inspired by traditional forms rooted in historic foundation. Generally, I approach these with a modern sensibility.

**You have suggested that furnishings in a room should be collected and allowed to mix like interesting guests at a party. What are your criteria for interesting?** An interesting environment for me is replete with what may be thought of as disparate objects that magically make sense together collectively. For instance, in my dining room I have a concrete table consisting of three asymmetrical concrete blocks as a base paired with Louis XVI armless dining chairs—which are the height of tradition—covered in white linen, which makes them completely modern.

**Your design aesthetic includes rather austere backgrounds—how do you keep things interesting?** I have a tremendous love and respect for architecture. That is what drives my penchant for plain, unadorned envelopes. I believe this is a great way to make an environment modern while at the same time allowing the art and furnishings to speak for themselves within an environment. For example, traditional Beaux Arts interior walls are adorned with picture molding and more elaborate crown molding. If these were to be painted in contrasting colors, the





architecture would then dominate the space. When painted one neutral color, the architecture takes on a crisper, more modern sensibility, thereby making any art placed on those walls more visually predominant.

**You say in your book that trends do not influence your designs.** The word "trend" denotes of the moment. I bristle because the intent behind my design is to create lasting environments. At the same time, progressive utility should always be at the forefront of design. What I mean is that there need to be accommodations in design responsive to the way

Designer Darryl Carter's collection with furniture manufacturer Thomasville offers a taste of his design calling card—classic forms and shapes made modern with neutral upholstery and dark wood finishes. **OPPOSITE LEFT:** Rollins dining table, Plains china chest, Repertoire armchair and side chairs, Benfield Series rug. **OPPOSITE RIGHT:** Mayfair nightstand, Modern Baroque lamp, Repertoire bed. **BELOW:** Bel Air bench. **RIGHT:** Wayne side chair.



## an eye for design

In his recently released book, *The New Traditional* (Clarkson Potter, 2008, \$45), designer Darryl Carter offers guidance for reinventing, balancing, and defining your home. Full of gorgeous photos, the 208-page volume tells how to achieve an environment that suits your family's lifestyle and gives you comfort. To explore Carter's furniture line with Thomasville, visit [thomasville.com/darrylcarter](http://thomasville.com/darrylcarter). For more information about Carter, his design company, and his products, visit [darrylcarter.com](http://darrylcarter.com).







"In creating a home, the objective should be to make comfortable environments that uniquely suit you."

—DESIGNER DARRYL CARTER, IN *THE NEW TRADITIONAL*

we live in terms of efficiencies of operation or composition, and use of materials as economies allow.

**What motivated you to design the line of furniture for Thomasville?** Given my penchant for antiques, I found myself searching for furniture pieces that were elusive by their limited quantity or accessibility in the marketplace. This type of search also proves to be time- and cost-prohibitive when contemplating tight deadlines. For instance: looking for and finding a set of 12 antique dining room chairs. Good luck with that.

**How does the furniture line epitomize your design ethos?** The Thomasville collection is unusual in that it complements a full home, offering a variety of accessories from lamps to artwork. The collection also offers a Darryl Carter textile line. One way to create a lasting environment is to use tried-and-true traditional forms. That is the predominating design direction of the collection. The twist is to contempo-

rize these forms through the use of nontraditional textiles. For instance, a camelback sofa that traditionally would be covered in a formal damask becomes modern and approachable when executed in a neutral linen. Presently we have a lighting collection to the trade available through Urban Electric Co. with multiple other venues in development.

**Is there one thing (or more than one thing) that's a must for every space?** For my purposes, the one thing that is a must for any and every space is a sense of the individual who lives therein. I often dedicate a wall as homage for black-and-white family photography—an upper landing or small library is a great venue for this.

**What are some of your personal favorite things?** The most cherished things in my home are not objects, but rather moments that I spend with friends, family, and, of course, my dogs.





Visit [BHG.com/decoratingmag](http://BHG.com/decoratingmag) to see more of Darryl Carter's line of furnishings for Thomasville.



Carter's furniture line offers not only upholstered pieces and case goods, but also rugs, lamps, and other accessories. OPPOSITE: Neptune sofa, Wessex wing chair, Hensle table, Tunlaw Series rug. THIS PHOTO: Collette chair, Wellington Center table.