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Markham Roberts

1967–

“At the end of the day, you want a place that’s calm.”

Rooms artfully arranged to foster easy living and entertaining; well-bred fabrics; prime real estate afforded to small tables meant to hold drinks—these were once the hallmarks of gracious living, and they still describe the work of Markham Roberts, today’s torchbearer for classic American style. **Roberts is known for blowing the dust off traditional furnishings, stripping them of their dowager quality, and making them exciting once again.**

He continues to use old-fashioned chintzes and toiles, for example, that become contemporary when partnered with snappy colors and the right accessories. The same goes for that onetime stalwart of the living room: the game table, which Roberts has revived, nurturing the next generation of bridge players. Always he makes it a point not to get stuck in the past: “I certainly don’t want to live like my grandmother. I want to put my feet up and watch a flat-screen TV.”

Roberts’s other strength is his attention to detail, ranging from brown walls lacquered so beautifully they look like melted chocolate, to custom-designed furniture painted to look like animal horn. But as richly satisfying as Roberts’s work is, its greatest virtue is its lack of ostentation. Roberts, a native of Indianapolis, brings a Midwestern practicality to his profession. No matter how glossy the paint job, he couldn’t be flashy if he tried.

Opposite Having grown up in gracious surroundings, Markham Roberts is a favorite of young social types accustomed to well-mannered homes. Below Skilled at using every square inch of a room effectively, Roberts typically supplies enough seating for a crowd. Overleaf Roberts’s particular gift is the impossible trick of using strong color—walls lacquered sapphire, Tiffany-blue lampshades—to understated effect.



