



Bamboo Roman shades and yards of Belgian linen are the ideal materials for a bedroom that dearily welcomes the outdoors. In, Bamboo shades and Oyster Belgian Linen both by Barclay Butera Home. The French doors to the terrace are treated with elegant panels in a Ralph Lauren paisley. Photo by LOOK Photography. (From the book Barclay Butera: Living in Style by Barclay Butera, Assouline)

Barclay Butera

A Balanced Approach to Living in Style

By DEB BARRETT

For Barclay Butera, design has always been a family business. He grew up working in his mother's design business, eventually opening the Southern California office for her international clientele. In 1994 he launched his own company and in the 15 years since then has seen it grow and change in ways that reflect both his and his clients' lifestyles.

With both a new book, *Barclay Butera: Living in Style*, and a new collection of fabrics from Kravet based on the lifestyle themes from the book about to be released, Butera definitely lives by the examples set by his parents—the value of hard work, integrity and the importance of those traits when pursuing your dreams. *Vision* was able to talk with Butera on a life lived in the design industry.

Vision: What are some of the key lessons you've learned running your own business?

Barclay Butera: Over the years, employing up to 112 people, I learned the hard way that certain types of employees may try to take advantage of an owner who they perceive as a friend, rather than their employer. We now have about 75 employees, which is still a very large company for a design firm and I've learned, as the owner, to be a little more circumspect. Also, playing that role of owner, and then also having to be a designer, a new product developer, etc. ... wearing so many hats everyday is a balancing act. Finding that balance in life is very, very important.



Photo, courtesy of Barclay Butera Inc.

Barclay Butera

A Balanced Approach to Living in Style

By DEB BARRETT

For Barclay Butera, design has always been a family business. He grew up working in his mother's design business, eventually opening the Southern California office for her international clientele. In 1994 he launched his own company and in the 15 years since then has seen it grow and change in ways that reflect both his and his clients' lifestyles.

With both a new book, *Barclay Butera: Living in Style*, and a new collection of fabrics from Kravet based on the lifestyle themes from the book about to be released, Butera definitely lives by the examples set by his parents—the value of hard work, integrity and the importance of those traits when pursuing your dreams. *Vision* was able to talk with Butera on a life lived in the design industry:

Vision: What are some of the key lessons you've learned running your own business?

Barclay Butera: Over the years, employing up to 112 people, I learned the hard way that certain types of employees may try to take advantage of an owner who they perceive as a friend, rather than their employer. We now have about 75 employees, which is still a very large company for a design firm and I've learned, as the owner, to be a little more circumspect. Also, playing that role of owner, and then also having to be a designer, a new product developer, etc. ... wearing so many hats everyday is a balancing act. Finding that balance in life is very, very important.



Photo courtesy of Ba



Slender side paneling "Mallory Floral" by Ralph Lauren (above the views in this Deer Valley Utah great room, an example of Butera's preference for restrooms, softening accents at the window. Photo by Mark Lohman Photography, from the book Barclay Butera: Living in Style by Barclay Butera, Assouline)

Vision: How do you work with clients? What's the process for you?

BB: I have an initial 1 to 1-1/2 hour visit, usually at their residence so I get the aesthetic of what they love—the art or rugs or however they express themselves. It gives me a feeling about how they live and what the ultimate intention of hiring me is. This is another balancing act because you are like a therapist for the home. You are trying to create the integrity and flow of a home and still have balance with the client. For the client that needs a lot of attention I team up with one of my head designers who handles the day-to-day work for that project. This allows me to work on the manufacturing side, the licensing side, the new business development side, which is becoming even more important these days. I spend more time on new business development than I have in a long time.

Vision: Is that because of the economic climate or because it is becoming more of an interest of yours?

BB: I think it's both. I think that finding avenues of new business is imperative right now, but I also think that remembering your roots and what made you successful in the beginning is important. For my business those core themes are service and being respectful to the client, even if the client is considered "small." The client who buys a candle in the showroom in her 20s can ultimately be married to an attorney and in their 30s need their entire home done. If you create a great experience for someone at an early age they will stay a client for life. So the goal for my staff is that whoever walks through that door I want him to be a client for life.

Vision: In the design business, words like "luxury" and "high end" are bandied about, but really never defined. Your take?

BB: I call it approachable elegance

and I am a firm believer in it because I grew up in a formal atmosphere, where the living room and dining room were not used. I believe that the living room is called the living room because it is meant to be lived in and the dining room is called the dining room because it is meant to be dined in. I believe in doing approachable spaces. They are not meant to be showcases; I want you to live in your rooms. Throw the pillows on the floor; put your feet up on the sofa; enjoy your space.

Vision: What do you consider the foundation of a room?

BB: That depends on the client. Let's say the client has a great piece of art that they love so it's that one grounding piece to the room I can play off of. Or they have a great area rug that I can layer in the room. That area rug is going to play a lot into the textiles that I choose. I have a concept, "Yours, Mine and Ours," Most of the time, I am dealing with the "ours" where the couple has come to the project with their taste or pieces from their previous residences that we need to work with. When you go to look at a room you have to take into consideration that

"If you create a great experience for someone at an early age they will stay a client for life."

the client is trying to blend to their own taste palette and use me as the guiding influence.

Vision: What room in the house do you think will change the most dramatically in the next five years?

BB: I think it is already happening, particularly in California, and that is the disappearance of a formal dining room and living room into a great room—a room that has a kitchen at one end, and a fabulous fireplace at

the other and the middle is a dining area and a couple of seating areas. It's not that people are living less formally; it's that they are living more practically and using the square footage of their home. The trend is toward socializing and enjoying the square footage of your home with all age groups—children and adults.

Vision: What has been your greatest design influence?

BB: I am heavily influenced by my travels and my interest in fashion. I bring my influences in to the room and my textiles to the market like a fashion designer brings her influences onto the runway.

Vision: How do you funnel your inspiration down to focus on a "look" and meet the client's needs?



Greek key valance and Roman shade by Barclay Butera Home, Ralph Lauren toile wallpaper (discontinued), Callista bathroom fixtures. Photo by Mark Lohman Photography, (From the book Barclay Butera: Living in Style by Barclay Butera, Assouline)



Side panels and Roman shades by Barclay Butera Home, panel fabric from Lee Jofa, Roman shade from Ralph Lauren, "Claudine Stripe." Above the white wainscoting is "Susan Weave" in sand, from Ralph Lauren, a mix of color and texture that is one of Butera's signatures. Photo by Mark Lohman Photography, (From the book Barclay Butera: Living in Style by Barclay Butera, Assouline)

BB: Editing is a major aspect of interiors—you are editing what they have currently and editing by room. It's an incredibly large editing process.

Vision: How does your editing process work when selecting and creating window fashion designs for a room?

BB: Window treatments are meant to soften all the structure and squared lines in a room and so I think too many details in a window treatment makes them overwhelming. I prefer window treatments that are a backdrop to a room and not the focal point. V

Deb Barrett is a trend specialist for WF Vision/Grace McNamara Inc. and is principal of Window Dressings Inc., a custom window treatment and soft furnishings firm near Chicago.

Vision: How do you work with clients? What's the process for you?

BB: I have an initial 1 to 1-1/2 hour visit, usually at their residence so I get the aesthetic of what they love—the art or rugs or however they express themselves. It gives me a feeling about how they live and what the ultimate intention of hiring me is. This is another balancing act because you are like a therapist for the home. You are trying to create the integrity and flow of a home and still have balance with the client. For the client that needs a lot of attention I team up with one of my head designers who handles the day-to-day work for that project. This allows me to work on the manufacturing side, the licensing side, the new business development side, which is becoming even more important these days. I spend more time on new business development than I have in a long time.

Vision: Is that because of the economic climate or because it is becoming more of an interest of yours?

BB: I think it's both. I think that finding avenues of new business is imperative right now, but I also think that remembering your roots and what made you successful in the beginning is important. For my business those core themes are service and being respectful to the client, even if the client is considered "small." The client who buys a candle in the showroom in her 20s can ultimately be married to an attorney and in their 30s need their entire home done. If you create a great experience for someone at an early age they will stay a client for life. So the goal for my staff is that whoever walks through that door I want him to be a client for life.

Vision: In the design business, words like "luxury" and "high end" are bandied about, but really never defined. Your take?

BB: I call it approachable elegance

and I am a firm believer in it because I grew up in a formal atmosphere, where the living room and dining room were not used. I believe that the living room is called the living room because it is meant to be lived in and the dining room is called the dining room because it is meant to be dined in. I believe in doing approachable spaces. They are not meant to be showcases; I want you to live in your rooms. Throw the pillows on the floor; put your feet up on the sofa; enjoy your space.

Vision: What do you consider the foundation of a room?

BB: That depends on the client. Let's say the client has a great piece of art that they love so it's that one grounding piece to the room I can play off of. Or they have a great area rug that I can layer in the room. That area rug is going to play a lot into the textiles that I choose. I have a concept, "Yours, Mine and Ours."

Most of the time, I am dealing with the "ours" where the couple has come to the project with their taste or pieces from their previous residences that we need to work with. When you go to look at a room you have to take into consideration that the client is trying to blend to their own taste palette and use me as the guiding influence.

Vision: What room in the house do you think will change the most dramatically in the next five years?

BB: I think it is already happening, particularly in California, and that is the disappearance of a formal dining room and living room into a great room—a room that has a kitchen at one end, and a fabulous fireplace at

the other and the middle is a dining area and a couple of seating areas. It's not that people are living less formally; it's that they are living more practically and using the square footage of their home. The trend is toward socializing and enjoying the square footage of your home with all age groups—children and adults.

Vision: What has been your greatest design influence?

BB: I am heavily influenced by my travels and my interest in fashion. I bring my influences in to the room and my textiles to the market like a fashion designer brings her influences onto the runway.

Vision: How do you funnel your inspiration down to focus on a “look” and meet the client's needs?

BB: Editing is a major aspect of interiors—you are editing what they have currently and editing by room. It's an incredibly large editing process.

Vision: How does your editing process work when selecting and creating window fashion designs for a room?

BB: Window treatments are meant to soften all the structure and squared lines in a room and so I think too many details in a window treatment makes them overwhelming. I prefer window treatments that are a backdrop to a room and not the focal point. **V**

Deb Barrett is a trend specialist for WF Vision/Grace McNamara Inc. and is principal of Window Dressings Inc., a custom window treatment and soft furnishings firm near Chicago.