



southern tradition with ginger brewton



WITH GINGER BREWTON

Text by Kristy Woodson Harvey

For Charleston designer Ginger Brewton, in life and in interiors, roots have always been important. When the Greenville, South Carolina-born designer moved to Charleston, she started a trend. The majority of her family—and their traditions—moved to the coast as well.

As it turns out, family and Southern style might have that in common. When it comes to design in the South, “there’s always some aspect of tradition,” Brewton said. Whether it’s furniture, china, or art, things that have been handed down from family seem to usually make an appearance in Southern homes. For clients who have certain pieces that are of significant meaning or importance, Brewton said, “we start there.”

But honoring tradition doesn’t have to be *traditional*. While previous generations have tended to be more traditional, “our generation is more classically modern,” Brewton said. Straighter lines and cleaner looks are what Brewton is seeing more and more of. But these looks are “still layered and textured and warm, so it’s not too stale or contrived.”

And, of course, so much of Brewton’s design starts with a focal point. A fabric “even in it’s just on two pillows” can be just luxe enough to become a starting place for a room. In addition, Brewton said, “I’ve done an entire room around a piece of art.”

For clients who have a firm idea of what they want their home to look like, that focal point can be a good start. But, for those who are unsure of their style, Brewton goes back further. She asks, “What’s your favorite hotel? What colors do you wear?” She takes the time to explore where her clients like to be and why and how their family lives and functions in their home. Do they entertain? Do they prefer things to be closed or more open?

It is this attention to detail and the needs of her clients that undoubtedly contributed to what Ginger describes as “probably the best moment to date” of being a designer, that day that she arrived home from a humanitarian trip to Argentina to find a thick envelope waiting for her. It was a package congratulating her on being named one of *House Beautiful’s* twenty “Next Wave” designers, and, by extension, joining the ranks of Nate Berkus, Ruthie Sommers, and Laura Kikar, among others, who have also received this coveted recognition.



Although that was one of the best moments of her design career, Brewton keeps a sense of humor about the fact that a designer’s job isn’t always easy. Recently, for example, a gorgeous Phillip Jeffries wallpaper was delivered to a client’s house in the wrong color and had been halfway installed in the master bedroom when she arrived for the morning. “It’s funny now,” she says, laughing, though, at the time, it was decidedly less so. “Lesson learned,” Brewton said. “Always check what you receive first.”

This talented designer might still garner lessons on the job, but she certainly took the time to lay the right educational foundation for her career. After two years as an independent decorative artist in Charleston, Brewton knew that she loved working in interiors and wanted to be more involved in the entire process. She studied at the New York School of Interior Design in Manhattan and apprenticed with Elaine Griffin Interior Design.

Other designers, in both the design and fashion worlds, have played into Brewton’s style as well. “I’ve always been a big fan of Kelly Wearstler,” Brewton said. “I think she does things that are really different and out-of-the-box.” Alessandra Branca and Celerie Kemble also top Brewton’s inspiration list, as well as a number of fashion designers. “I love a range of fashion depending on my mood and how I feel that day,” Brewton said.

In fashion or design, clean, straight lines and a minimal look have always appealed to Brewton. “I’ve never been into more frou-frou things.”

But, whatever your style, Brewton believes in starting with a plan for creating a space you’ll love, whether with a designer or on your own. For those just starting out trying to design their own spaces, Brewton advises searching extensively for rooms you love and then trying “to replicate those ideas... with less expensive finds.” From Habitat to Ikea, Brewton says, “It’s crazy what you can find locally.”

If locally means the South, then that style likely “goes back to the tradition and sense of family.” But making your own mark is key. Designing a Southern home starts with that base of tradition and comes back to “how your personal style fits into it,” Brewton said. “It’s interesting to see how your tastes evolve.”

For more of Ginger Brewton’s work, visit [Design Chic](#).

