



WD

WILLEY DESIGN LLC
WILLEYDESIGN.COM
(212) 579-4159

INTERIOR DESIGN | INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE



EDITOR'S LETTER



Back to School

THE WORLD OF DESIGN AND THE concept of taste are inextricably linked. In fact, designers would not exist if taste were not so important to all of us. Designers are seen as tastemakers, yet few things are as personal. But how do you define taste? This is where things get murky. Iconic American interior designer Dorothy Draper (who professionalized the industry) said, "It was not good or bad, it was just taste."

■ This past June, I attended the fifth annual Dorothy Draper School of Decorating at the Grand Hotel (made famous from films like *This Time for Keeps* and *Somewhere in Time*) on Mackinac Island in Michigan. I could not think of anything more fun than learning about this design maverick from Carleton Varney, who not

only worked for her but became the president of Dorothy Draper & Company. And, most importantly, I would be staying in a hotel designed by Carleton Varney in the Dorothy Draper style. Each of the 300-plus rooms at the Grand Hotel are individually designed. I was not disappointed. From the moment I saw the world's longest porch and walked through the stunning lobby to my room, I was smitten. My room was a beautiful palette of green, white and purple. Not only were the colors uplifting, but the play of scale—from the purple checked rug and the little posies on the wallpaper to the blooming meadow of petals on my bed skirt and window treatment—was masterful. And before you think it might be too much, the painted white furniture and trim anchored the room. ■ It all made sense to me as I sat listening to the lecture about Dorothy Draper's style. This was *her* taste and *she* believed in herself. (After all, she was the first woman to start an interior design company!) I was staying in a room, a hotel and, yes, a world created with a clear design objective, with color, scale and pattern. ■ While most of us couldn't live year round with so much color and pattern, I do think it is important to experience design with such a confident voice.



Carleton Varney thinks, "These days it seems as if we are living in a bowl of oatmeal." And perhaps Dorothy Draper & Company designs remind us that our homes should be uplifting and we should have some fun creating them! And then, most importantly, believe in our taste. As Dorothy Draper said: "If it looks right, it is right!"



The Grand Hotel (grandhotel.com) lobby embraces color, scale and pattern. See October CTC&G for an excerpt from Carleton Varney's new book *Rooms to Remember* (Shannongrove Press, 2019).

DJ Carey
DJ. CAREY
Editorial Director
djcarey@candg.com

CAREY: CHICHI LUBIÑA; HAIR AND MAKEUP BY WARREN TRICOMI; SALON AND SPA, GREENWICH; LOBBY: D.J. CAREY