



PHOTOGRAPHS
DUSTIN PECK

INTERVIEW
CIARA BIRD

GRAY WALKER *interiors*

What is your favorite thing about living and working in Charlotte? I love Charlotte for many reasons. I am southern and have always felt the vibe here suited me personally. It's a small city with a lot to offer. I met my husband here while I was working for a large design firm and he was a young bond trader at Nation's Bank... that was a LONG time ago. We stayed here to raise our boys and be close to my hometown Columbia, SC. Charlotte is a small southern city with LOTS of style. The women I work with are quite chic and have incredible taste. It's great being in a city with and understanding and appreciation for art and design.

Did you always know you would work in design? I knew I loved art the design part came after I got my BA in art history from The University of Georgia. I studied photography in Italy while in my last semester at Georgia and knew I really connected to the concept of composition. When I came back home I went to work for the interior design firm that did my parent's home and it all clicked. I figured out the composition concept for me applied to furniture and fabrics within rooms. I went back to school and got my BFA in interior design.

Do you have any studio rules? Describe your work space. I don't follow rules myself. I hate rules and laugh to my husband about



how I would be fired if I had to work in the financial world he lives in. I guess my pet peeve is things going back where they are supposed to be. After meetings things are thrown all over my studio... I am really picky about every piece of fabric, trim, paint chips going back to their spot. My studio is organized but I am not a rule girl. I like pretty and organized.

Daily rituals? Wake up see my husband and youngest son off by 7 am. I then head to my desk and check emails and scroll through Instagram before 8:15 workout. By 10 or 10:30 I can be dressed at a meeting ready to go for my day. Dry shampoo and make up can do wonders. I work back and forth between projects at my desk. I research product like a crazy woman. I find something I like and I want it or I want to place it in someone's home. I think about my work all of the time. Around 5:30 I will start to think about dinner getting ready. After dinner I take a very hot bath every night. I am a homebody and love being with my family just hanging out!

What is your favorite part of the design process? I enjoy all of the phases ... I do love a photo shoot because you see your work in a very glamorous way. Photography isn't real life but it is just amazing to see your work in 2 D with the right lights, angles and lots of flowers.

What fuels your passion for design? My creativity and desire to make something unique and spectacular.

What items are essential for you to get started? A fabulous painting, rug, antique... Items that really speak to me when I do an initial meeting with a new client. There is always something that a client has that excites me.

How is your personal style reflected in your work? My personal style is about serenity and glamour. I like a space that is easy to read and relaxing. That serenity needs a little spunk and that is when I throw in my classic glamour. Clean, chic, glamorous spaces.

What's your uniform? I don't have a uniform. I wish I did. I will say in the summer in Charlotte you will most often find me in an easy cotton dress because the heat forces me to keep it simple.

How long did it take for you to develop your signature style? I actually think it took longer than I would have thought. I am currently redecorating my entire house to be reflective of my signature style... I started my own business in 1996, you do the math. I am not going to promise I won't do this again!

Do you find that you think about decorating your own spaces differently than when working for a client? YES! It is so much harder. I actually have to stop and make myself think as hard as I do on my client's homes. My brain just whizzes around all of my options and I have to lasso my



thoughts in and stay focused on the entire house and how it will read as a whole. I am so DONE with my renovation and ready to think about my client's exclusively. It's hard to be your own interior designer I think I will hire one next time.

Is there anything in particular that you are currently obsessed with? I am currently decluttering and simplifying. Ask me that in a year.

Do you have a specialty? What is your favorite room/space to decorate? I love a master bedroom. I have fun decorating spaces that can be feminine and elegant.

Tell us about your clients, do you like to start from scratch or work with individuals who already have a vision? My clients usually have a vision and hire me to execute the design and add my signature elements.

Do you have a go-to color palette or texture? I can honestly say I don't ever do the same things with colors and texture over and over. Though I am into metallics big time lately.

What other art forms/kinds of artists to you have a high appreciation for? Balletinas. They are athletic, graceful and disciplined.

Where is your favorite place to escape? The Amalfi coast in Italy.

