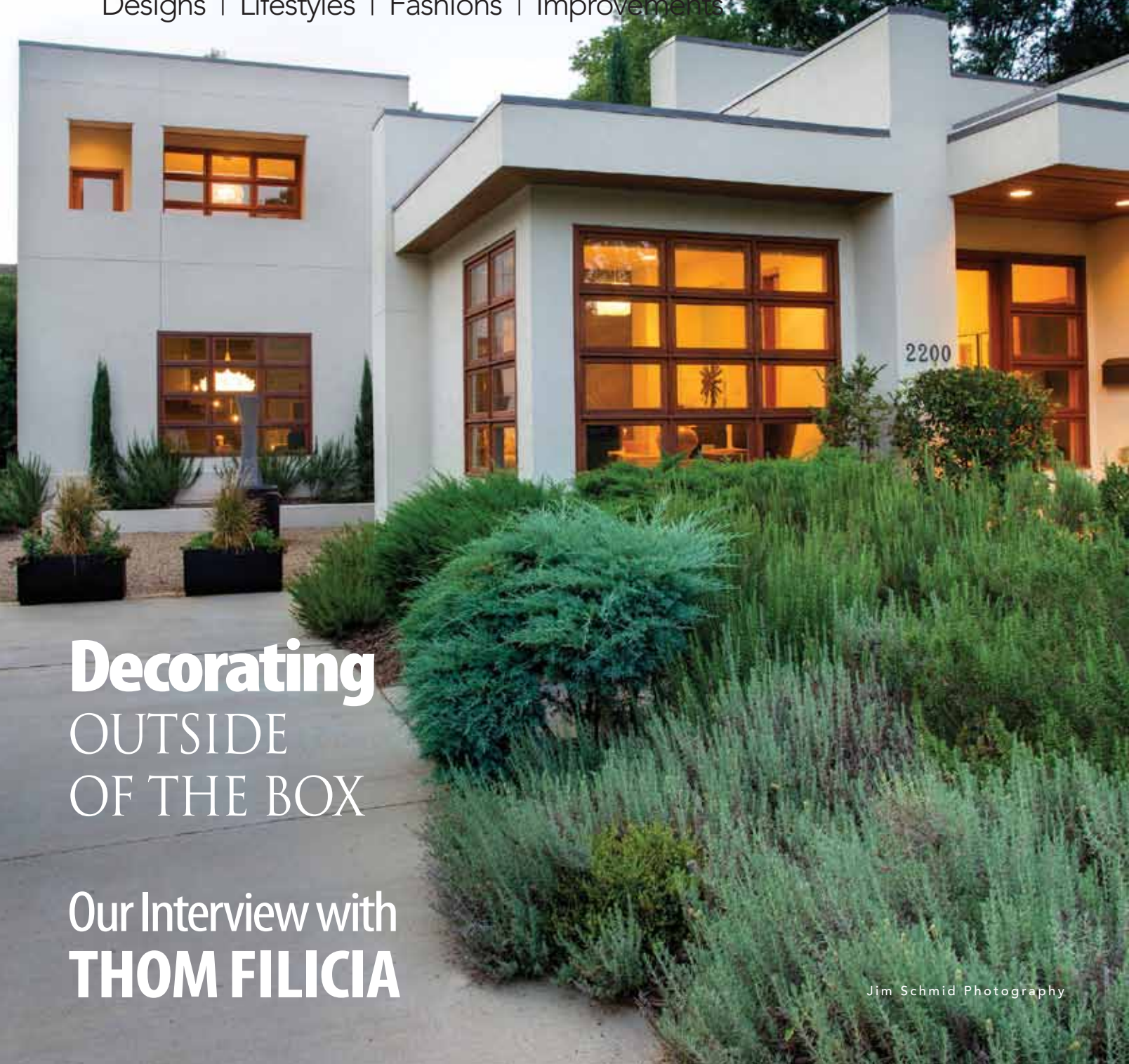


CHARLOTTE URBAN

HOME

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2011

Designs | Lifestyles | Fashions | Improvements



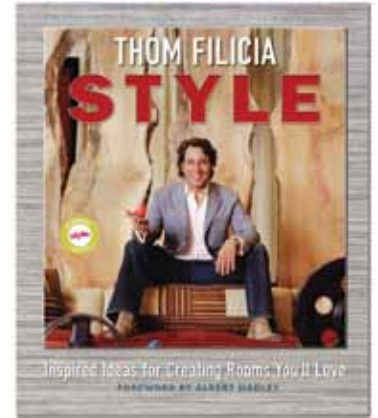
Decorating
OUTSIDE
OF THE BOX

Our Interview with
THOM FILICIA

Jim Schmid Photography

A CONVERSATION WITH THOM FILICIA

Photography by Eric Piasecki



URBAN HOME SAT DOWN WITH
THOM TO LEARN MORE ABOUT
HIS FURNITURE, HIS INSPIRATION,
DESIGN SECRETS AND OF COURSE,
TINA FEY'S APARTMENT.

by Nancy Atkinson

THOM FILICIA MAY BE BEST KNOWN FOR HIS EMMY-
AWARD WINNING ROLE AS THE INTERIOR DESIGN
GURU ON THE TELEVISION SHOW *QUEER EYE FOR THE
STRAIGHT GUY* OR FOR HIS OWN SHOW *DRESS MY NEST*.

But the accomplished designer has also authored two books on style and has had his own successful interior design firm in SoHo since 1998. In 2006 he made the list of *House Beautiful's* Top 100 designers and the same year was chosen one of *House & Garden's* Top 50 Tastemakers. Today he works with high profile clients including Jennifer Lopez and Tina Fey.

In our area recently to work on his new collection for Vanguard Furniture before the October market in High Point, we sat down with Thom to learn more about his furniture, his inspiration, design secrets and of course, Tina Fey's apartment.

UH: This is your fifth year at the High Point Market for Vanguard Furniture. What can you tell us about your new collection?

Thom: It's called New American because the pieces are classically inspired with a fresh take, so they feel more appropriate for the way we live today. Rather than reproducing classic pieces that were relevant years and years ago, the furniture connects with the way we live today but is also rooted in tradition.

We're doing 27 new pieces, and adding new categories: Thom Felicia American Sophisticate, American Waterfront, and American Altitude. American Altitude will be furniture with a mountain home in mind, but in a Thom Felicia way. The Sophisticate will be a little bit sleeker, a little bit urban. The silhouettes of the pieces are designed so that in eight years you can change the fabric and they'll be very relevant. They will age well.

UH: Do you have personal favorites in the new collection?

Thom: The eagle console is one of my favorites – that's an iconic or signature piece for me. The Cazenovia bed is a beautiful piece with an upholstered headboard. I also love the Saratoga sofa and the James Street wing chair.



UH: Furniture is only one aspect of Thom Filicia Home. You're also designing fabrics, rugs, artwork, bedding, have I left anything out?

Thom: We're finalizing our lighting vendor now. We seek design partners that make sense for what we're trying to build in terms of price point, quality and design. My entire line of fabrics from Kravet is only available to the design industry, but 30% of the fabrics are also sold at Calico Corners. My

artwork is available from Soicher Marin, bedding from Eastern Accents, and a line of commercial carpets from Shaw.

UH: The Charlotte market has in the past been very traditional but is becoming more modern. What is the secret to incorporating

modern pieces into traditional settings?

Thom: What was traditional 30 to 40 years ago is very different than what's traditional today. So while you might say Charlotte is becoming more modern, I would actually argue that traditional is just becoming cleaner.

It's not that people are changing; what's traditional is changing. If you think about fashion and what a traditional gal wore 30 years ago, she would look at a girl today that's very classic and think she was racy. What is traditional today is much cleaner. What is modern today I think tends to be a bit warmer. What was modern 30 or 40 years ago was very severe.

UH: What can you tell us about modern classicism and how you design?

Thom: I see design as a total balancing act. If you have a very traditional home, a very classic home, I always encourage people to try and incorporate things that are a little bit cleaner and crisper in their environment to balance it out. And if you're living in a glass box I think it's really important that you incorporate a lot of natural elements even if you do it in a modern way so you actually get the warmth and the texture and the non-machine aspect of the modernity.

I think today people are more and more attracted to balance in design. Years ago men used to sleep in rooms that were floral and very girly. Today couples tend to live in environments that reflect both of



their tastes. When you're in an environment that feels well balanced, it just feels comfortable. You notice it.

UH: What design mistake do most of us make in our homes?

Thom: Most people design homes that are not for their real lives. Very often I think homes look more like a catalogue than it does your personality. And it can be very attractive but it doesn't really have any soul. You should be able to walk into someone's home and really understand the people who live there.

Very often homes were built at a time when people lived differently. And very few people customize, build from scratch or modify their home to really reflect their personality. If you cook and entertain a lot and you have a big living room but a tiny dining room there's no reason you couldn't turn your living room into a dining room that seats 20 people. I think sometimes people find themselves trapped in a small room in the back of the house because they haven't really listened to what they need; they're just following the blueprint of the house or what they think they're supposed to do.

UH: What is your favorite trick for giving rooms an instant life?

Thom: Most spaces today lack architectural detail so I like bringing in furniture, artwork or wall texture that gives a space an architectural point of view. In a lot of my furniture you'll see details you would normally see in a stair railing or other architecture.

The Strathmore console, which is probably my favorite piece I've ever designed, is taken from Georgian architecture, which is a repeat of circles in a frieze. It's taking those architectural details and being inspired by them because they don't exist anymore. So you're seeing it in a way you haven't seen it before, in a modern context, which feels fresh and cool. And the space is very happy to have it because it needs it.

UH: When's the last time you had an idea for a room and you thought 'This is crazy' but then it worked?

Thom: In every project and everything I do I try to think about what would be a little bit crazy, then dial it back to fit the time schedule and

budget. I think that's how you find really interesting creative solutions that people are wowed by – going beyond what you're probably going to do creatively and then bringing it back.

UH: What design trends are exciting you now?

Thom: We are incorporating design from all over the world – things that are very, very high end with things that are more basic or more even tribal. You can mix early American with African and Indian. So many different things are available to us right now that I think it's exciting for designers but can be daunting for some people to have so many options. For me, to be able to synthesize all this down into what that makes sense to me and turn it into a product people can be excited about is pretty awesome.

UH: Last but not least, what's the most fabulous design element of the apartment you designed for Tina Fey?

Thom: Their apartment is beautiful. They love it and I'm really proud of it, but it's also very much in her point of view. She can be glamorous but she's a down to earth person. My favorite thing I did for that project was paint her gallery floor, where you come in off the vestibule, a beautiful blue gray chevron so as soon as you walk in that's what you see. It's very dramatic, very interesting and cool.❖

Want more Thom Filicia? He'll be making numerous appearances on several of HGTV's most popular design shows this season and has a starring role in a holiday special. Thom also has a new book in the works with Clarkson Potter titled *Hammered – Thom's Guide for Renovation, Decoration and Entertaining with Style* about the renovation of his new country home in Finger Lakes, New York. Look for it in bookstores next summer. To see his collection through Vanguard Furniture, visit High Cotton Home at 2137 South Boulevard or call 704-335-1220. To see more of Thom's lines and to hear the entire interview, visit our web site, www.urbanhomemagazine.com.