

REFLECTIONS ON
Swedish Interiors



Rhonda Eleish & Edie van Breems

Photographs by Neil Landino



A Northern Light on the Eastern Shore

BARBARA PACA AND PHILIP LOGAN

Barbara Paca's work as an international landscape architect is informed by her deep love of the history of botanical exploration as well as an abiding respect for the architectural traditions of her eighteenth-century Maryland ancestors. The tidal inlets, waterways and rolling farmland of Maryland's Eastern Shore run in her veins, and it is here that she and her husband, Philip Logan, have put down roots in the form of a nineteenth-century house in the peaceful and historic village of Oxford. Barbara and Philip's New York-based company, Preservation Green, LLC, also maintains a private satellite in Oxford where the focus is on developing sustainable alternatives to the way buildings and landscapes are made.

Taking us through her garden, Barbara explains her admiration for early American and Swedish design. "There is a deep reverence for Mother Nature inherent in both styles of architecture that Philip and I embrace. Like early Swedish architecture, early American architecture had to tip its hat to the formidable forces of a new world. As our *weltanschauung*, or world view, is sharpened vis-à-vis the fragility of the environment, many of us are returning to traditional common sense principles in the way we design and live in nature." The renovations and additions to the house, as viewed from the garden, are a testament to Barbara and Philip's vision of living in harmony with their geographic location. Exterior balconies and decks were added to increase the connection to the outside and allow for more light and air into the house. The house was made more accessible for their son Tilghman, who is wheelchair bound, by adding a ramp and an interior elevator to access all three floors. Modern technologies were added to decrease the carbon footprint, such as transitioning to a geothermal system and integrating German solar panels.

A Swedish Rococo stool and Gustavian armchairs that Barbara brought home from Paris started her well-curated Swedish antiques collection. A landscape architect, Barbara was immediately taken by the grey-painted eighteenth-century Swedish architect's desk.

The studio, built by Barbara and Philip as homage to Maryland's Wye House Orangerie, is lit at night by chandeliers from Prague, found in an old house on the Tred Avon River. Urns from an overgrown garden near Baltimore are set on top of the massive rococo stove from Switzerland.





“When I think of Sweden . . . Carl Linnaeus! Carl Linnaeus was a genius. I couldn’t hope to hold a candle to his legacy. I just admire the way he saw the world around him, took it in, and reinterpreted it to others with brilliance and good taste. Hammarby is a dream, and in that vision are all of the elements that changed and conquered the natural world.”

Barbara and Phillip’s regard for practical yet sophisticated designs from the past are visible in the new studio addition filled with Swedish Gustavian antiques. Traditional black-and-white marble tiles set on the diagonal run the length of the two-story room flanked by jlb doors which open dramatically onto the back garden, pool and a small hunting lodge, called the Gunnery. The studio is inspired by the Orangerie at Wye House, the oldest existing greenhouse in America and one of Barbara’s favorite buildings of the world. “Wye’s orangerie served as a beautiful laboratory where great botanical experiments were conducted,” says Barbara, “We were deeply inspired by the high artistic and engineering achievements of that mid-eighteenth-century space.” A large Baroque tile stove, ca. 1730, is the focal point of the studio space. Imported from Switzerland, it was reassembled by American and Austrian craftsmen using modern firebrick and mortar. The incredibly efficient radiant heating system of the kachelugn, traditional to Swedish and Northern European homes, made sense from a practical as well as visual point of view. “Americans tend to rely on woodstoves more than kachelofens. Could it be that Europeans are more family oriented and as a result they plan for subsequent generations? Once Americans realize how much nicer and more energy efficient it is to have a gentle, radiant heat (versus the burning hot surfaces of a Jøtul or Fisher stove), I think they will lean toward kachelofens. Wood is, after all, a renewable resource and Americans have been conquering their forests for centuries to make room for farmland!”

Using what is natively available and repurposing materials is an aspect of early Swedish and American design bred from necessity. It also often came from a deep pride of place when landowners would build using the very best materials their holdings offered. At Preservation Green, Phillip explains that they are committed to the use of





When building the studio, black-and-white marble tile flooring was installed. The tile flooring is a sly nod to the northern palaces of Europe and a natural backdrop for Barbara's fine collection of Swedish Gustavian antiques. Black-and-white marble tiles were also traditionally used in many gracious early American homes for their durability and good effect. The jib doors are signature to early Maryland houses, evidence of Marylanders' love of the outdoors and strong aesthetic desire to blur the line between inside and exterior space. The pale robin's-egg-blue tea table is Gustavian, ca. 1780.





reclaimed materials, such as the painted pine railings and doors they salvaged from Plimhimmon, one of the ancestral homes of the Tilghman family. "The combination of materials in their raw state, expressed functionality and the celebrations of the effects of time results in a patina that is textured and historic without becoming a pastiche. These surfaces cannot be re-created but only allowed to breathe with new life in the simple fresh compositions we are able to create." Reclaimed heart pine cut from Baltimore warehouse beams was used for flooring and four-inch-thick marble slabs from Independence Mall in downtown Philadelphia surround the therapy pool in the garden. Architectural integrity was preserved wherever possible in the house, with all of the windows completely taken apart and cleaned of old lead paint, gently white-washed and sealed with safe products. Native plants are also a big part of the "using the best of what is already there" equation. "One of my favorite plants," says Barbara, "is the bright yellow Black Eyed Susan, scientific name *Rudbeckia hirta*. The State Flower of Maryland, this treasure provides nectar to nourish butterflies and seeds that feed birds during the winter months. Appropriately, Carl Linnaeus named this American beauty *Rudbeckia* in honor of his professor, Olaf Rudbeck. I like mixing *Rudbeckia* with three cultivars of the very native Maryland flowering tobacco; namely, the tall muscular *Nicotiana sylvestris*, green *Nicotiana langsdorfii* and my favorite, the fragrant *Nicotiana affinis*. My passion for blending New and Old World plants is probably the greatest driving force behind my work as a landscape designer."

Barbara's love of the Swedish Baroque and Rococo periods, as well as the Gustavian, are deeply personal. Her family is among the first colonial settlers with many distinguished relatives, among them William Paca who was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Paca and his family were painted by the famous Charles Willson Peale, who was educated in the tradition of the important Swedish portraitist

FACING: A Gustavian crystal chandelier hangs above an arrangement of *Nicotiana* 'White Perfume'—adored for being at its most fragrant on hot summer nights.

ABOVE: A view from the studio looks out upon the Gunnery, Barbara's twin brother, Dr. Robert Paca's hunting lodge. A rococo Swedish settee is set out under the Gunnery arbor on sunny days.



"Americans will come to realize how much nicer and more energy efficient it is to have a gentle, radiant heat."

Gustavus Hesselius (1682–1755) and his son John Hesselius. His relations were painted by the Hesselius family on many occasions. Paca's interest in these Swedish family portraits, as well as with famous Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus, meant she was poised and curious when Swedish antiques crossed her path one winter afternoon in Paris. Collecting, Barbara was soon to learn, can start as a fascination and become a fate. When Barbara contacted us at Eleish van Breems, Ltd, to locate specific pieces and help her curate her expanding collection, we were delighted to guide her. It has been a privilege over the years to watch Barbara skillfully integrate special eighteenth-century Swedish furniture into her Maryland home and other projects. From a built-in country stuga-style bed to a fine collection of gilt mirrors, each piece is showcased thoughtfully and to great effect. "Swedish antiques were an integral part of the renovation," Barbara relates, "And I relied on my trusted experts, Rhonda and Edie, to allow me to purchase worthy pieces around which spaces were created. The blending of Swedish and American eighteenth-century furniture and decorative arts sits well in a place as remote and romantic as Maryland's Eastern Shore."

Barbara and Philip are next combining their skills and creativity to transform a commercial property in Oxford, once owned by one of the founding African American families of Maryland's Eastern Shore, into a state-of-the-art horticultural research center. "Like our home," says Philip, "the result will be a composition where the parts work together with the whole to create a harmonious environment that is both historic, refined, sustainable and modest at the same time." To this Barbara adds that the facility also plans to provide a nurturing environment for American servicemen and servicewomen who are returning from wars with significant physical and mental disabilities. "As a workplace that holds out a hand to help others, stability and beauty will merge with nature," states Barbara. A challenging mission statement, but like the windswept Eastern Shore, clearly bolstered by solid muscle just beneath the surface.

warming wood





“It is the play of soft raking grey light on the coastal landscapes,” muses Philip, “where aging and peeling painted wood boathouses nestle against pine and birch forests and granite shorelines. These are the images that are the most vivid for me when thinking of Sweden and the Baltic Sea.”

FACING: Barbara takes a Swedish minimalist approach to the main house’s entranceway, allowing the lines of the curved stairway and the various wood patinas to be the focal point. The Swedish bench bed is painted in traditional Falun red paint with blue detailing. Originally the day bed would pull out to make a bed for a child or servant but in contemporary times makes a fantastic, large storage bench.

BELOW: The stair and an early allmoge (or folk) Swedish bench display the simple beauty of paint and patina.







LEFT: A Swedish transitional mirror from 1760 hangs in the corner of the living room. Both the oil painting and the large pastel over the mantel are by Maryland artist Ruth Starr Rose. Chippendale camelback sofas are covered with sepia-colored quilted velvet. The large leather ottoman was designed by Barbara as a practical leather-covered boot rest after muddy gardening—the perfect example of form meets function.

ABOVE: While being warm and comfortable there is nothing excessive about this room. “Anchored both by a respect for nature, I think the early American and Swedish furniture work well together,” says Barbara. “I love the mixture of the Kaare Klint chairs as they are twentieth-century attempts at reinterpreting the earlier Chippendale style.”





LEFT: A rare built-in bed cupboard from an eighteenth-century Swedish stuga was acquired by Barbara in New England and brought down to Maryland, where it was installed in one of the upstairs guest rooms. Built-in beds such as this one served as private spaces in country farm homes where one room living around a hearth was not uncommon. Warm, cozy and practical, the built-ins were almost always dual purpose with cupboards, secretaries and even clocks forming the outside part of the unit. They are also warm, cozy and practical as Barbara dresses her bed up with pink toile and Swiss bed linens.

ABOVE: Intricate geometric moldings are the hallmarks of this Swedish cupboard bed from the north of Sweden. Eleish van Breems, Ltd., was instrumental in sourcing and advising Barbara and Philip on the rare Swedish antiques in their collection.

BELOW: In the ultimate salvage story, Barbara and Philip were able to rescue these rails from a local colonial estate that had once belonged to her ancestors and have incorporated them throughout the house. Barbara's brother painstakingly stripped the native yellow pine wood with special lead abatement techniques and then gently whitewashed and preserved the wood with a matte finish. The railings were then waxed with a lot of good old-fashioned elbow grease.



use native material



ABOVE: The Gunnery is the hunting lodge of Barbara's brother. The collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century furniture here is masculine and solid for relaxation after a day in a goose blind, stalking deer, or out fishing in the Chesapeake. The pale celadon tile stove was designed and built on-site to heat the Gunnery. "The length

is extra long so that the gentle healing heat would be long enough for my brother to comfortably stretch out on. As he is 6'6", the construction was no small task!"

FACING ABOVE: Etchings and sketches are by Charleston, South Carolina's famous twentieth-century artist Alfred H. Huty.



RIGHT: Rare horticultural books such as William Gilpin's *Observations of Highlands of Scotland* are among Barbara's collection.



ABOVE: A surprising American connection to the history of botanical exploration is that five naturalists in Colonial Maryland had collected native Maryland plant specimens between 1697 and 1736. The plants had been gathered and brought by boat to London for the famous Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus. Linnaeus studied these plants in preparation for his groundbreaking book on botanical nomenclature, *Species Plantarum* (1753).

FACING: The tradition of using local native materials from your land or salvaged from the surrounding countryside has always been common in Sweden where resources were historically scarce. At Preservation Green, Barbara and Philip make a mission of rescuing materials from the past and incorporating those elements into their projects. Here, four-inch-thick marble slabs salvaged from Independence Mall in downtown Philadelphia surround Tilghman's therapy pool in the garden.



