

ELLE DECOR

IN MEMORIAM: DECORATING SUPERSTAR MARIO BUATTA, THE "PRINCE OF CHINTZ," HAS DIED

The New York interior design legend had an unwavering passion for pattern and color.



By [INGRID ABRAMOVITCH](#) OCT 16, 2018



Patrick McMullan / Contributor / Getty

Decorating legend Mario Buatta, affectionately known in the design industry as the "Prince of Chintz" for his love of floral fabric and English country style, died yesterday evening.

He embraced his nickname and never wavered from his dedication to color. "I always liked being called that," he [told me in a March 2011 *ELLE DECOR* interview](#). "If you don't like chintz, don't come to me."

Over the course of his impressive career, which began in the 1950s, the New York-based interior designer worked with a slew of celebrities, including Mariah Carey and Barbara Walters, who appreciated his signature maximalist approach to decorating. His work was influenced by legendary designers like Sister Parish.

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"I loved working with Mario on designing my NYC apartment," Carey told ELLE DECOR when we reached out to her today. "He was a wonderful collaborator with an eye for beauty, and he truly helped make my vision for a home complete."

"Color is a mood setter," Buatta told me. "It can make you feel great. But people have a fear of

color. They're afraid of what their friends will say or not say."

In 2013, Rizzoli published his monograph, [*Mario Buatta: Fifty Years of American Interior Decoration*](#), which documented the designer's career. The book, co-authored by design historian Emily Evans Eerdmans, offers insights into Buatta's start working for department store B. Altman & Co in the 1950s. It also highlights unpublished photographs from his archive and explores some of the decorating rules that served as the foundation for his career over the years. "He was a genius," Eerdmans told us today. "He brought beauty and prettiness to the world, and gorgeous color."

Buatta, who grew up on Staten Island, loved rooms that felt lived-in and decorated over time. "You can't treat decorating as fashion; it's not like a dress you can push to the back of the closet," he said. "A room is an investment in money and time. No room is a still life. It should look like it happened over years."

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Ingrid Abramovitch, the Executive Editor at ELLE Decor, writes about design, architecture, renovation, and lifestyle, and is the author of several books on design including *Restoring a House in the City*.