

# Galerie



## Remembering Decorating Icon Mario Buatta

The celebrated designer known as the 'Prince of Chintz' died on Monday

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**D**ecorating legend Mario Buatta, often referred to as the “Prince of Chintz,” died on Monday, just shy of his 83rd birthday.

Known for his English country house style, Buatta counted Barbara Walters, Malcolm Forbes, Mariah Carrey, Billy Joel, and S.I. Newhouse among his many clients. In the 1980s, he redecorated Blair House, the official White House guest residence. He favored highly feminine, maximalist decor that was influenced by such decorators as Sister Parish, Sibyl Colefax, and

John Fowler.

Buatta, who grew up on Staten Island, started out as a salesman at New York City department stores. He took architecture courses at Cooper Union but dropped out after his mother passed away. “I just didn’t like architecture,” he once told *The New York Times*. “I wanted to know where the pillows went, not where the pipes went.” He later took design classes at Pratt Institute and Columbia University. He went on to spend several years working for other designers, Elisabeth C. Draper and Keith Irvine among them. Buatta opened his own firm in 1963, at the age of 28.



Buatta in a client's living room in the '70s.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF RIZZOLI

The designer's only book, *Mario Buatta: Fifty Years of American Interior Decoration* (Rizzoli, \$75), was released in 2013. In more than 400 pages, it chronicles his career in great detail, sharing his insights into his process and his own rules for decorating. The tome also showcases the decorator's body of work, filled with images taken for shelter magazines as well as many unpublished photographs from the designer's own archive.

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“Mario had a natural genius,” Emily Evans Eerdmans, an author and design historian who cowrote the book with Buatta, tells *Galerie*. “He always imagined that he was creating backdrops for his clients to live their best life against. Indeed, walking into one of his colorful and always comfortable rooms was like a glass of Champagne—one feels glamorous and optimistic that only happy endings exist.”