

Notebook

DELVING DEEPER INTO THE DESIGN
WORLD'S CHARACTERS AND STORIES

Burnham Design's
Max Humphrey and
Betsy Burnham at
Humphrey's West
Hollywood apartment.



Inside Job

Burnham Design's brand-new partner on creating an irrepressible home environment

*Written by Jennifer Fernandez
Photographed by Sarah Dario*

When it comes to careers in interiors, Max Humphrey has a more colorful background than most: the former punk rocker spent years on the road before homing in on a career in design. Luckily, he has a mentor in Betsy Burnham, a woman known for blending sophistication with streetwise panache. Now a partner at the LA-based firm, Humphrey drew upon his fresh eye and Burnham's experience when designing his own one-bedroom apartment in West Hollywood. The result? A home that reflects his lifestyle, past and present. Read on for the design duo's thoughts on the process. **L**



Oversize posters of French New Wave films help bring a "decorated" look down to earth.

The screen was sourced at a local auction house. When shopping out-of-state auctions, "stick to table lamps and accessories," Humphrey recommends.

"Use an area rug to ground a seating arrangement," says Humphrey. This chevron-striped model adds texture.

NO. 1 USE ACCESSORIES TO INTRODUCE COLOR

Upholster larger pieces in solid, neutral fabrics and add colorful patterned pillows, advises Humphrey. "We lean toward pale or white walls," Burnham explains. "They offer a ton of flexibility and allow for updating art and accessories as tastes and styles change."

NO. 2 BLEND ERAS AND TEXTURES

"You don't want everything to look like it came from one source," says Humphrey. Here, a modern sofa joins antique pieces and items found on Craigslist. "I don't think Max was going for any particular theme," says Burnham. "He was simply true to his tastes, and the result is fresh and unique."



"Creating a successful interior is like building a meaningful wardrobe: flirt with trends but invest in timeless pieces, like this clean-lined sofa," says Burnham.

"Cover an oversize coffee table with stacks of books, boxes, and trays of accessories," says Humphrey.



"Don't be too precious about art," says Humphrey. "Hiding it behind lamps or pieces of furniture gives it a look that feels lived-in and collected over time."

NO. 3

SET OUT AN ENTICING SPREAD

Humphrey doesn't drink, so he created a sober bar area stocked with fancy sodas and bright accessories. "It's basically an excuse to show off my glassware," he says.

"The Moroccan lantern hanging over the classic Saarinen table is fantastic," says Burnham. "If it were paired with a carved or inlaid piece, the effect wouldn't be nearly as interesting."

"Choose a few pieces to be custom framed for variety," says Burnham. "Most people buy ready-made frames and resize their art to fit, and it ends up looking like a furniture showroom."



NO. 4

BUILD A BETTER WALL GALLERY

Start with the biggest frame in the center and fill in the wall around it, varying sizes and even shapes. "I don't use tape or those gallery wall guides—I don't like when it looks too perfect or designery," says Humphrey.

"My favorite thing about this space is the mix of masculine and feminine elements," says Burnham. "It's whimsical but grounded at the same time."

NO. 5

DON'T LET A LEASE LIMIT YOUR IMAGINATION

"Just because you live in a rental doesn't mean it can't feel like home," says Humphrey. Choose a limited space to wallpaper—Humphrey selected a nook off his entryway—so that removing it won't be a hassle when you leave. "Small rooms like this are fun to do because every element can be special."



"I don't play anymore, but I keep a few guitars around as a reminder of my secret past life," says Humphrey. "This one is properly beat up, like any good vintage accessory."



"The mix of pieces—the Asian secretary, Eames chairs, and Mouille-inspired light fixture—is edgy and offbeat," Burnham says.

"Max bought the table from a well-known retailer but found a genius way to make it his own," says Burnham of the vintage 48-star American flag that Humphrey uses as a tablecloth.

"I left this poster unframed because it's got a sturdy linen backing," says Humphrey. "I liked the idea of the corner curling up—like something you'd see in a cool European design magazine."

NO. 6
LOOSEN UP IN THE DINING ROOM
To add a touch of the unexpected to what's often the most traditional room in the house, pair dissonant imagery and pieces that blur the line between high and low. "This is the most rock-and-roll room in the entire apartment," says Burnham. "It gives new meaning to the word *curated*."

"The rest of the art in the room is really bright," Humphrey says. "I like the black-and-white photograph for contrast."



"The brass tortoise-shell is actually a lamp," says Humphrey. "I bought it on Etsy; it's modeled after an old Arthur Court design."



"I buy vintage foo dogs at auctions and on eBay and Etsy," says Humphrey. "I don't know why I started collecting them, but now I have an army of them. They guard my apartment when I'm at work."

"The mirror is both graceful and practical," says Burnham. "It dresses up what would be a strictly retro space and helps create depth in the galley area."



"A large kitchen wasn't a priority for me," says Humphrey. "But keeping it all white—with just a few pops of color—helps make it look a little bigger."

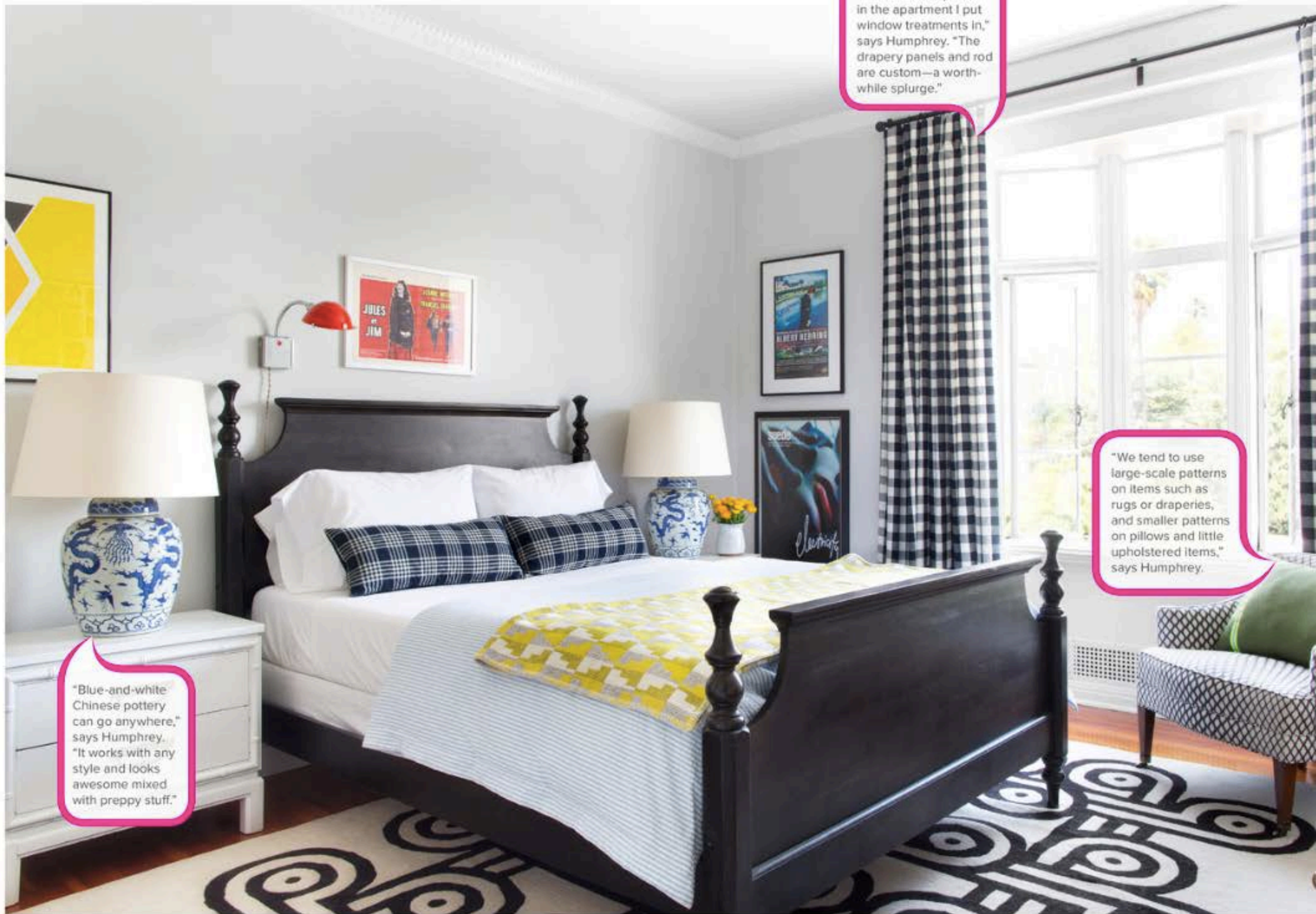
NO. 7 KEEP YOUR LIFESTYLE IN MIND

Choose things you love and arrange them in a way that reflects how you live. "This record player is portable, so I can carry it around to different rooms," says Humphrey. "My books are the most important part of my apartment—they're the only things I'd be nostalgic for if they were gone. And having open shelving in the kitchen is super functional for me: this is the dinnerware I use on a regular basis."

NO. 8

PAY ATTENTION TO SCALE

Incorporating pattern can be tricky, but it helps to vary the scale and size of each print. "Everything doesn't have to match, but it does need to coexist," says Humphrey. Adds Burnham, "The common through line in this room is the simple palette: black, white, and blue."



"Blue-and-white Chinese pottery can go anywhere," says Humphrey. "It works with any style and looks awesome mixed with preppy stuff."

"This is the only room in the apartment I put window treatments in," says Humphrey. "The drapery panels and rod are custom—a worthwhile splurge."

"We tend to use large-scale patterns on items such as rugs or draperies, and smaller patterns on pillows and little upholstered items," says Humphrey.



"Be adventurous with your assortment of pieces," says Burnham. "Collect what you're into even if it seems uncool—the result will instantly be original."

"It's as important to layer textures and materials as patterns," says Burnham.

NO. 9 EDIT, EDIT, EDIT

"There's a fine line between collected and cluttered," says Burnham. "The editing is just as important as the collecting." Humphrey constantly changes the arrangement of his personal items, rotating art and switching pieces out to create interesting vignettes that reflect his style.

NO. 10 KNOW WHEN TO LEAVE IT ALONE

"I didn't want to change anything that was original to the period," says Humphrey. So he kept the azure tiles in his bathroom intact, adding a fresh coat of white paint and eclectic accessories: towels with a Greek-key trim, a Moroccan stool, a geometric bath mat, and a contemporary Warhol poster.



"I got the idea to put plant pots directly into vintage Asian pottery cups from Jeffrey Bilhuber's amazing book *The Way Home*," says Humphrey. "It's easier than transferring the plant—soil and all—to a larger pot."