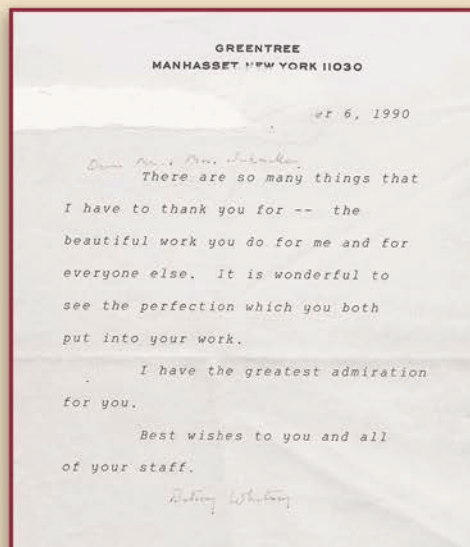
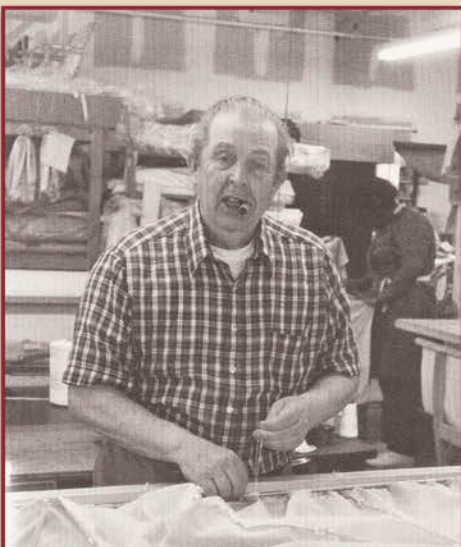




# SCHNELLER



A FAMILY AND A BUSINESS



BRAD SCHNELLER

## About SCHNELLER®

*Excerpts from Other Materials*

“When I started with Sis, her upholstery was done by A. Schneller and Sons. The Schnellers worked with all the old-guard decorators, going back to Elsie de Wolfe and Bill Pahlmann. Today, I continue to work with . . . the Schnellers. Having done business with the original Mr. Schneller, today I deal with his grandson Jon and his wife Pam . . . [they] are more than upholsterers, they are true artists with remarkable taste. Everything they do is hands-on and top quality.”

– *Albert Hadley: The Story of America’s Preeminent Interior Designer*  
by Adam Lewis, page 203, from Albert’s perspective

“Later, on arrival at the workroom, I find eight sofas, six upholstered chairs, wrapped and marked for living room, library, hall, master bedroom, guest rooms one, two, and three. I trust that they are perfect. The curtains and valances are hanging, waiting to be packed. I begin to wonder, is the fringe deep enough? Is the tape set back far enough? Could the valance stand more bells? My eye goes to the curtains for the master bedroom. I can’t help smiling, they are so beautiful. The bed stands alone, and, even against the dreary workroom walls with bare lightbulbs, it demands a look of wonder. The canopy is a dome, made like the most beautiful parasol; the pale green fluted posts justify holding this miracle of white muslin bound in grosgrain ribbons, with magic workmanship. The folds meet the center like a star, each point standing alone. One wonders, who could help but sleep? The bedspread of white roses on chintz is like a cool summer garden, lined with light flannel to give it a quilt look. The tiny bows that keep it together are bound in pale green. The headboard is quilted, each rose standing out, showing perfect design. The dust ruffle, like the canopy, is white, full, and frothy, and just right to pull it all together.”

– *Sister*  
by Apple Bartlett and Susan Bartlett Crater,  
page 162, from Sister Parish’s perspective

“One of the first things I did with Albert was to go to A. Schneller Sons, which is one of the truly great upholstery and curtain workrooms . . . Arthur Schneller was a magician with curtains. He seemed to have a lifeline between his fingertips and the fabric. Albert took me to look at some flannel mock-ups of valances, something I had never seen before. The flannel mock-ups made it possible to adjust and fine-tune the draping, proportion, and so on; Mr. Schneller would cut things with you, and you could tweak and fit until you got them just so . . . I remember thinking during that moment, “This so exceeds my wildest imagination.” I had never before dreamed that one could make anything so custom-tailored to the project and to the client . . .”

– *Parish-Hadley Tree of Life*  
by **Brian McCarthy and Bunny Williams,**  
page 122, from **Brian’s perspective**

# SCHNELLER



A FAMILY AND A BUSINESS

By Brad Schneller

# CONTENTS

PREFACE *ix*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS *xiii*

BERNHARD AND JOHANN   1  
*Settling in New York and Establishing the Family's Business*

ADOLPH AND FLOSSY   11  
*Carrying the Legacy Forward, Through Good Times and Bad*

ARTHUR AND VIRGINIA   23  
*Bringing Schneller Into the Modern Era and Establishing  
an Extraordinary Relationship with Parish-Hadley*

JON AND PAM   45  
*Beyond Parish-Hadley and Into the Fourth Generation*

BRAD   65  
*Looking Forward*

GALLERY OF SELECT PROJECTS   69  
*Courtesy of Bunny Williams Interior Design*

BIBLIOGRAPHY 115

Jon had been in and around the workroom his whole life, but when he returned to the business full time, he focused on doing installations in clients' homes, working onsite directly with the decorators. Not only did this give him an intimate understanding of what went into designing and producing the highest quality furnishings; it also resulted in a lot of face-time with decorators and the clients for whom the decorators worked. Working alongside Sister Parish and Albert Hadley, he gained their trust and became a welcomed visitor at many of the firm's esteemed clients' homes, just as his father had years earlier. Those homes included the residences of Mrs. Vincent Astor, wife of the great-great-grandson of John Jacob Astor, America's first millionaire; the Whitney's Greentree Estate; the homes of Charles Engelhard, the precious metals tycoon; and the homes of the Harriman and Getty families; among others.



*Arthur, Virginia and Jon in the showroom  
1987*



*Jon Schneller in the workroom at 129 W. 29th Street*

*TRIO: (from left) Arthur, Virginia, and Jon Schneller guard their clients' privacy.*



## On Installation for the Cisneros Family in Venezuela

Founded in Venezuela in 1929 by Diego Cisneros, Grupo Cisneros began as a small shipping company that diversified into consumer products (including acting as the exclusive bottler of Pepsi-Cola in Venezuela), Studebaker automobiles, and media and today is one of the largest privately held media companies in the world. In 1970, when Diego Cisneros unexpectedly suffered a stroke, leadership was transferred to his two sons, Ricardo and Gustavo. Though he was only 25 years old, Gustavo assumed the position of Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the company.

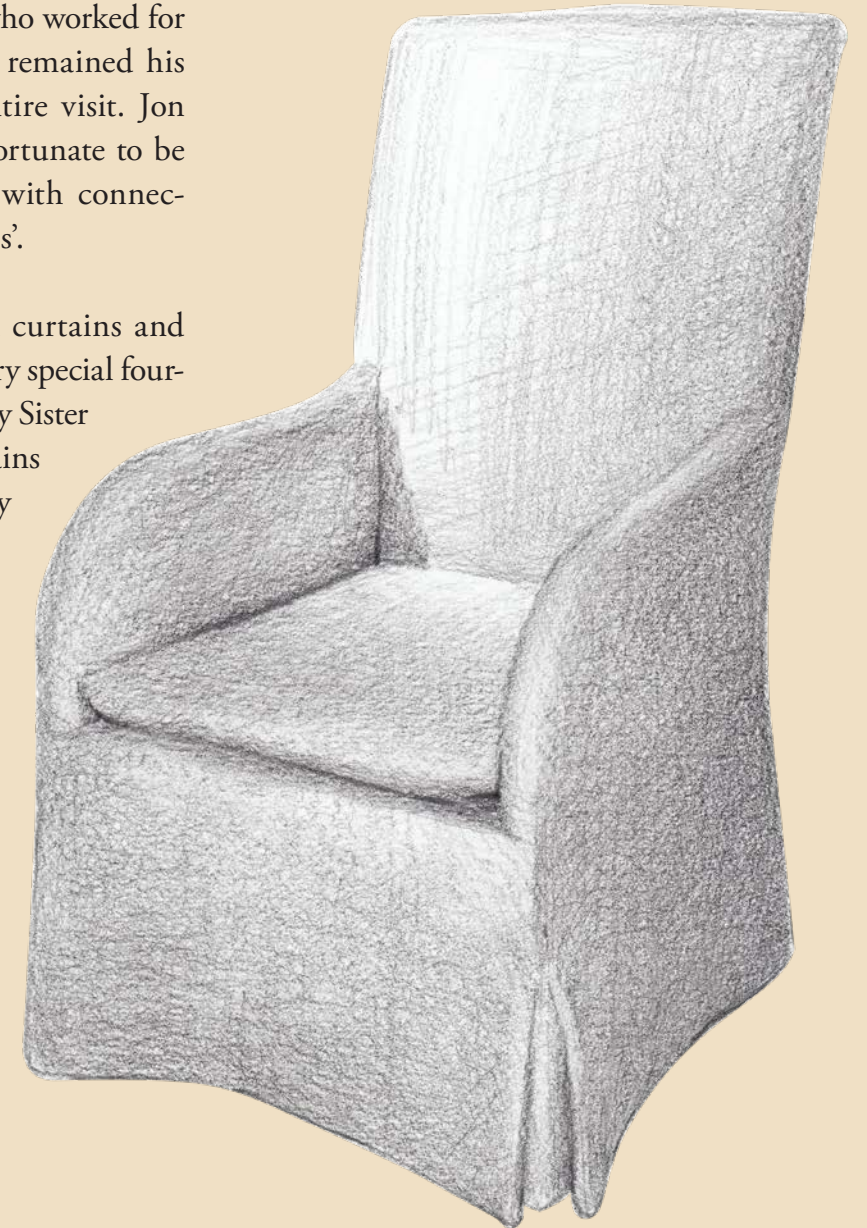
Not long thereafter, in the late 1970s, Gustavo hired Parish-Hadley to decorate his family's home in Caracas, the capital. A. Schneller Sons was tasked with, among other things, installing curtains and beds in the home, and Jon was scheduled to fly to Caracas for the installation. He never received a work visa and was told he would be allowed in as a guest. Because of the country's reputation for violence, however, he was hesitant to go.

Venezuela was a democracy at the time, but despite being more politically stable than it is today, it was a dangerous place to live. Trucks full of soldiers with weapons on their shoulders could often be seen driving through the streets of the city. There was no middle class and the division between rich and poor was stark. Well-to-do people, such as the Cisneros family, lived in heavily fortified communities with high walls, guard dogs, and armed security.

Just as Jon had feared, when he arrived at the airport in Caracas he was immediately pulled into an office and interrogated regarding the purpose of his visit. He was afraid that they would hold him in custody, and the fact that he spoke no Spanish, had no direction (not even an address), and no visa compounded the issue. Fortunately, after some time, a senior official abruptly intervened and they immediately let Jon go. It was clear they had received word that he was working directly for someone of great importance. He was picked up

by an armed guard who worked for the family and who remained his chauffeur for the entire visit. Jon considered himself fortunate to be working for people with connections like the Cisneros'.

On site, he installed curtains and bed hangings for a very special four-poster bed designed by Sister and Albert. The curtains were lavish and heavily trimmed, hanging from gilded wood poles in the traditional European style. In the dining room, there were a dozen dining chairs specifically designed for the family with an embroidered C on the back, produced by A. Schneller Sons and called the Cisneros chair.



*The Cisneros chair,  
designed for Gustavo Cisneros by  
Parish-Hadley and A. Schneller Sons*



As business expanded, after Schneller had moved to the larger space at 129 West 29th Street, they opened up a full showroom and started developing all new lines of furniture. Custom pieces were reworked and reimaged for each designer, client, and room. Models such as the Whitney sofa, the DeBarrows sofa, the Paley chair, the Astor chair, and the Hadley wing chair were created and named for the clients and decorators who provided the inspiration.

---

*One of my favorite pieces I have from Schneller is a channel backed curved sofa, a Culp Sofa. It has the same height back all along and was channel-backed and was actually made for a project for the Engelhards, but for some reason we got the size wrong. It was made in a wonderful chocolate-brown, heavy silk material. Albert sent it back into the Parish-Hadley warehouse because it was a mistake, and a new one was ordered the right size, and everything was fine. When I moved into my first proper apartment, moved out of a studio into a 1-bedroom, I was living grand, but of course I didn't have a stick of furniture. And Albert being Albert said, 'There's a sofa in the warehouse I think might work in your living room.' And there was this beautiful brown silk sofa. I lived with that sofa in my 67th St. apartment for years and years, and I still have it! It's still the most beautifully proportioned piece of furniture.*

— DAVID KLEINBERG

---



---

*The Debarrows sofa was one of my first designs. That sofa is a perfect example of one of those times when you develop a design and it's just a success. I was working with a decorator, Marshall Biddle, on a very famous home in Virginia, and he wanted something that was high in the back, with a wing on it to rest a pillow and lie in the corner. I worked out the proportions, pitch, scale, and the model has become one of the most versatile and popular we make.*

*Mrs. Brooke Astor's home in Tarrytown was smaller than a lot of other country houses, but it was so tasteful with a formal English garden and a big fountain. It was spectacular. Some of the walls were round, and we had to build furniture pieces that fit into the spaces, so we took some of our designs and re-shaped them to fit her rooms. This is when my father and I started to collaborate a little bit. I would go out and measure the patterns and sizes, then everybody would get together around the design table and work out the design and dimensions, and we'd go from there.*

— JON SCHNELLER

---

## The Whitney Sofa and Greentree

Among the homes maintained by Jock Whitney (descendant of John Whitney who had come from London to Massachusetts in 1635) and his second wife Betsey Cushing Roosevelt was Greentree, a 500-acre estate and mansion in Manhasset, Long Island. The home had started as a simple farmhouse almost 200 years earlier but had grown over time into a grand mansion with a guest wing alone of more than ten rooms.

Sister Parish's family and the Whitneys had a long history dating back to the beginning of the 20th century, and she and Mr. Hadley had re-decorated most of the rooms in the house at one time or another. Mr. Whitney himself was an avid art collector, being president of the Museum of Modern Art, and the house was adorned with his collection of Rembrandts, Michelangelos, Picassos, and works by his personal favorite, Matisse.

Sometime in the late 60s/early 70s,

Sister and Mr. Hadley helped the Whitneys redecorate the movie room at Greentree. It was unlike any movie room of the time, with a 35mm projector, like a real movie theater, and rather than rows of seats, the floor plan called for club chairs and sofas. Sister Parish and Mrs. Whitney wanted something inviting but also something unique to Greentree. They sought sofas you could pull your feet up on that were also comfortable enough to spend hours enjoying a movie in.

Thus the Whitney sofa was born. Designed by Sister Parish and Arthur Schneller, the Whitney sofa was deep enough to pull your feet up, with sweeping arms and tufting throughout, so it had a lush, inviting feel but could withstand hours of use. Six of them were built and installed in the movie room at Greentree and the model went on to become a favorite of designers associated with the firm of Parish-Hadley for decades to come.



*The Whitney Sofa, designed for Mrs. Whitney*

*“... my Whitney sofa that I have been living with for almost 30 years [is one of my favorite Schneller models] ... I've had that Whitney sofa in my living room for 28 years and it's only been reupholstered once ... It's the beauty of things that are well made. These things if you take care of them are with you forever. I could no more imagine living without that Whitney sofa than I don't know what. It's one of the great models of all time. I love it.”*

– BRIAN MCCARTHY

*“Through Parish Hadley ... we've worked for some of the greatest clients in this country. What's fun is some of the furniture they're still making is named for the project they were built for ... The Paley chair. The Whitney sofa for the long island estate of John Whitney. The Astor chair for Mrs. Vincent Astor.”*

– BUNNY WILLIAMS

*“[The Whitney sofa] was designed for her house in Manhasset ... The first time I saw that sofa was when they did the Getty apartment and I loved it. I've used it on many occasions since.”*

– MICHAEL WHALEY

GREENTREE  
MANHASSET, NEW YORK 11030

er 6, 1990

*Dear Mr. & Mrs. Schneller*

There are so many things that  
I have to thank you for -- the  
beautiful work you do for me and for  
everyone else. It is wonderful to  
see the perfection which you both  
put into your work.

I have the greatest admiration  
for you.

Best wishes to you and all  
of your staff.

*Arthur Whitney*

Thank you from Mrs. Whitney of the  
Greentree Estate to Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Schneller  
1990

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Schneller

JON AND PAM

57

---

*When I first started in the business, I did all the measuring and installations. My experiences in the homes of our customers was enlightening and impressive, to say the least. As an art major, I immediately recognized much of the art in their private collections, but the fine antiques, charming staff, car collections, boats, and stables were beyond anything I had seen or imagined growing up.*

*The Whitney Estate, Greentree, was one of the most memorable to me for a number of reasons. One time I was there hanging about ten pairs of curtains, and there were priceless paintings all around me, at least 100 of them; Picasso, all the Impressionists, the best painters in the world. I suddenly realized that there I was, drilling holes, and making dust to install curtains - right next to a Van Gogh.*

— JON SCHNELLER

---

By 1990, Jon was principally in charge of the workroom. Arthur gradually passed the reins to his son but continued to participate in crafting and designing custom furniture pieces. His natural feel for draping fabrics also continued to serve the company well. Virginia ran the office until she passed away unexpectedly in 1999. Pam, who had been working part time, immediately stepped in. Pam's past experience as a retail buyer gave her an understanding of the wants and needs of high-end clients, and she turned that understanding into a philosophy for personalized customer service. When a client called the office, even at odd hours, Pam picked up the phone. When a client had a question about their order, Pam had an answer for them. Pam's brother, Daniel Dietz, joined in 2000 to help with outside measuring and installations as Jon kept busy with the day-to-day design and management of the curtain and upholstery work.