

**JH:** What's fascinating to me is that there isn't a specific style of interior. In reading the book I was surprised at how personal it is.

**NB:** Yeah, it is intensely personal. It's really more than about the stuff. Actually the working title of the book was *The Stuff That Matters* and then I realized that "the stuff" were really things. And things are not only what you put into your home but who you invite into your home and where you've been, where you've traveled, who you've loved and who you've lost. Things that you've gained and gone through and what you've lost grasp of leads us to where we are in our lives at any certain point. This book is really about the homes and the spaces that reflect that.

**JH:** I've read your book and was actually in tears because it affected me at a very personal level. It's amazing that a book on design would do that.

**NB:** What happened is that I didn't set out to share as much of my story as I did when I started writing the book. But what I realized is that if I am going into these people's homes and asking them to share their stories, their victories, their challenges, their evolutions as people and the evolution of their spaces as well, then I needed to step up and share what's helped form my style. Where I've been and who I've known and what I've experienced in my life outside of design because it really does have an impact every day on what I live with and what I choose to surround myself with.

**JH:** As a designer, our job is to guide a client through the process of design. How do you help a client to determine their personal style?

**NB:** I studied sociology, so for me [it's about] what motivates people, and their history, their culture, where they come from, where their families originate from. What pieces have been handed down? What objects and style of furniture resonates with them? What brings out their memories of childhood? These are all questions I ask of clients when I'm working with them. I think it's really important to get to know someone. It can be a little awkward in the beginning, because you are stepping into someone's space and into someone's life, and they have hired you to create a space. It's not therapy, but at the same time it becomes a very free sharing of information. The end goal is the same. The end goal is when the project is done and the key is in someone's hand and they are living gracefully in that space, that everything that they've shared has been interpreted and researched and presented to them in a tangible way. That leads to a very harmonious relationship with the home.

**JH:** One of the things that I admire about your style is that you can take something as simple as a water glass, throw some roses in it and make it look spectacular. With your increased celebrity, and larger budgets, how has that changed how you shop?

**NB:** You know it actually hasn't at all. That's the funny part. It's really important to remember where you come from and I don't care how much money you have in your budget, there is a thrill in getting something beautifully designed and beautifully made for not a lot of money. Even the team of designers I have working for me, my office is in Chicago, even when we have a budget, we are able to scour the world for the best examples of what it is we are looking for. But we are always pairing things with things that we found in a local market, handicrafts, and inexpensive vintage things from multi-dealer antiques malls. My home itself is such a mix of things. It's never been about the price of something, it's always been about the beauty of a particular thing. I can have a \$14 box sitting on a \$5,000 coffee table and that works for me.

**JH:** Do you think there are regional styles ... design that reflects a particular area?

**NB:** I do. I find regional style fascinating. I think that every area in the world has ideas and aesthetics that are important to that region and that area. For instance, the use of blue and white tile in Portugal on interior walls is fascinating to me. What I love doing is gathering all that information and creating an interior, regardless of where it is, that sort of breaks all those rules.

**JH:** You have an amazing, extensive new line for Target. Has product design always been something you were attracted to?

**NB:** I wasn't attracted to it when I first started. I didn't think I could do it. I remember when I had my very first licensing agreement with Linens and Things, I said to one of my coworkers, "Oh my god. How many times does a fork have on it? What are the dimensions of twin sheets versus full sheets? I don't know any of this information. I've never been expected to know it." What's interesting is that once I started, I realized it's such a natural extension of everything that I love. I'm constantly traveling, and I'm constantly taking pictures with my phone. The inlaid flooring pattern of a sixteenth century cathedral in Naples becomes the top of a bedding design. A decorative iron window grate from Greece becomes another fabric pattern for me. Since that time, which was probably 9 years ago now, it's almost impossible for me not to start creating different things and different products. My friends tease me that when we are on vacation I'm always taking pictures of things. "What's that going to be? A vase at Target?" And I say, "Yeah, exactly."

**JH:** One of the things you advocate is layering things in interior design. Is that what your intent is for your new line at Target?

**NB:** Definitely. The line wasn't meant to be something that somebody would go in and buy in its entirety. My hope for the line is that people will layer it in with things that they already have. I've always been interested in the tension between old and new. That is why even though the collection has over 150 pieces, they are not a particular style. That was important for me.

**JH:** Right. You have something that looks like it's inspired by Swedish design and fabrics that look Moroccan in flavor.

**NB:** Exactly. It's really how I live. A lot of the products have been inspired by things that I live with. Vintage finds that are one of a kind that I thought, "You know what? It's time to give everybody an opportunity to live with some of these things."

**JH:** I'm curious, what is the first piece of furniture you would advise someone to buy?

**NB:** The sofa. It's the most practical thing and one of bigger ticket items that if chosen well, is something that can last for 20 years. And if you err toward classic style in a simple fabric, it's something that really does stand the test of time.

**JH:** A new line of product, and a new line. You were one of the producers of one my favorite movies from last year *The Help*. What's next on the horizon?

**NB:** I'm working on producing my second film, which I am very excited about. I can't give you any of the details yet, because it's not out