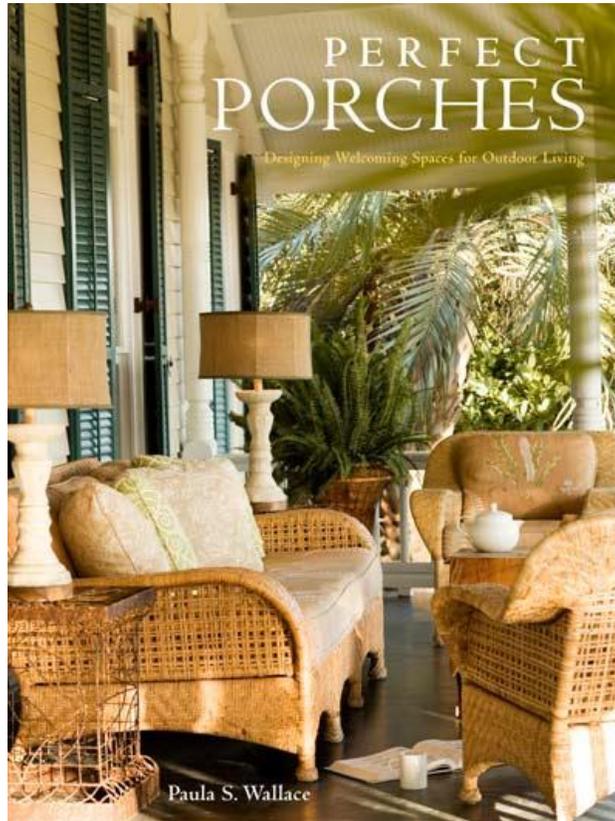


An Interview with Paula S. Wallace

Author of *Perfect Porches*



Book cover reprinted from the book *Perfect Porches* by Paula S. Wallace.
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Porch Lovers,

Dave and I are very pleased to introduce you to [Paula Wallace](#), author of the beautiful book *Perfect Porches*, a quintessential look at forty American porches. Ms. Wallace's love of porches, southern hospitality and beautiful architecture is very evident in this wonderful **must-have book**.

Ms. Wallace graciously took the time to share how she got the idea for her book. As you read the interview, you'll quick realize the love that Ms. Wallace has for porches. So, sit back and relax as you read this special exchange with Paula S. Wallace, President and co-founder of the **Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD)**, one of the largest art and design schools in the United States.

Order [your copy](#) of *Perfect Porches* and enjoy our [book summary](#). **Now enjoy the interview...**

Mary and Dave

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Meet the author of *Perfect Porches*

Paula S. Wallace



Paula Wallace is President and co-founder of the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), one of the largest art and design colleges in the United States.

As President of SCAD since the year 2000, Paula Wallace has led the university in unprecedented growth and established three new campuses including SCAD Atlanta, SCAD eLearning and SCAD Lacoste in France. She is currently establishing SCAD Hong Kong. Under her leadership, the college has earned awards from many organizations, including the American Institute of Architects, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the International Downtown Association, the Art Deco Societies of America, and the Historic Savannah Foundation.

Ms. Wallace has been highly instrumental in bringing artistic endeavors to Savannah, Georgia. She organizes art fairs, exhibits on the college campus and film festivals.

Ms. Wallace co-authored *A House in the South*. She has also written seven children's books in the "World" series where she discusses a specific topic in each book and how that topic relates to each of ten countries - for example birthdays, sports, food and holidays.

Ms. Wallace's vision has been celebrated by many leaders in the art and design world. **Diane von Furstenberg**, the well-known designer said "I am extremely impressed by the fact that one woman had a vision and she made it happen, and is helping so many people." **Tom Ford**, of Tom Ford International says "The vision of this woman who founded this school is incredible. It is absolutely mind boggling."

An Interview with Paula S. Wallace

Author of *Perfect Porches*

Brought to you by Front-Porch-Ideas-and-More.com

May you enjoy Ms. Wallace's insightful thoughts on how she was inspired to write the book, *Perfect Porches*, and how porches have defined her life as a child and adult.

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**Q: Take us back to the moment and the view that inspired this book. Where were you and what did you see before you when the concept for *Perfect Porches* captivated you?**

**A:** That's an easy one! The view was from my front porch in Atlanta, at 2201 Montrose Avenue. It was the home of my childhood, and how happy it was. It was our stage and our playground, our library and outdoor family room.

On rainy days, my sister Pam and I would turn tables upside down and build our own cozy rooms. We were **Laura and Mary Ingalls**, out on the prairie. That's what our porch was: a portal, into the world, into stories, into the imagination. And of course, it was about **family**.

Some of my favorite porch memories involve cuddling up alongside my dad while he listened to baseball games on the [radio](#).

I remember my **grandmother's porch**, too, in Collins, Mississippi. We spent summers there. Actually, there were two porches, front and back. These were very different spaces in form and function. The front porch, of course, was for company and visiting. The back porch was for work – shelling peas, snapping beans and cutting watermelon.

Grandmother's back porch wasn't all work, though. Sometimes, in the evenings, the front porch turned thespian. My Aunt Bess never married, and she lived on the farm with my grandmother. After supper, we would all retire to the porch for our amateur theatricals. Aunt Bess would help Pam and I hang sheets, and she would operate the spotlight – which, in this case, was a flashlight.

We had a tiny sombrero, small enough to fit in the palm of your hand, and we placed it on the floor. I sat at the piano just inside the door and played the “Jarabe Tapatío” –

also known as the "Mexican Hat Dance" – while Pam danced around the tiny hat. We considered it high art.

With memories like those, it was only a matter of time before I took on a book project about porches. In my previous book, *A House in the South*, we included a section on porches. But there was so much more to say, so many more porches to show, so many design ideas to share. It just made sense to do a book.

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**Q: Does the Savannah College of Art and Design teach interior design students how to approach outdoor spaces? Are they much different from indoor spaces?**

**A:** Absolutely, on both counts. We're in the midst of the **Great Porch Renaissance**, and clients want interior designers and architects to create *intentional outdoor spaces* – not just for homes, but in any and every kind of structure they might be designing: hospitals, corporate offices, retail spaces.

SCAD probably has more porches, per capita, than any other university in the country. There's a grand front porch on Magnolia Hall (Whitaker Street), a resting porch on the second floor of the Thomas Center (East Broad Street), a side porch on Lai Wa Hall (Drayton Street), and a classic Southern front porch at Smithfield Cottage (Hall Street), just to name a few.

It's important for SCAD students to see how porches enhance non-residential settings, and the SCAD campus is a living laboratory for our interior design students. SCAD graduates are ahead of the curve on imagining new ways to nurture the mind, the senses, and the human spirit through interior design and architecture. Porches are a big part of that.

From their very first course, SCAD interior design students learn about the relationship between indoor and outdoor spaces. They learn that natural light and natural views are not a luxury, but a necessity for human well being – no matter where you live. They learn to design modes and venues for people to connect with nature: through gardens, windows, porches.

And of course, **sustainable design** is integrated throughout the curriculum in the SCAD School of Building Arts. This includes not only learning to design with sustainable materials, but also creating energy-efficient homes.

And a well-designed porch can reduce energy use in remarkable ways – keeping direct sunlight off exterior walls and drawing residents outside, which means less television, less air-conditioning, less energy consumption.

When air-conditioning technology became affordable in the mid-twentieth century, American homeowners fell in love with the technology – especially down South. And why not? Our summers can last six months! Up until the 1950s, the front porch had always been the coolest place in the house.

But after the advent of air-conditioning, porches became one of the warmest places in the home, at least during summer. Homeowners headed indoors, and they wouldn't come out again for fifty years. The decline of the porch had another cause, too. Which is to say, right around the time that air-conditioning became popular, and so did television. We continued to gather as a family and listen to stories, but this time, they were coming from the television.

Things have started to change, by degrees (literally!). Americans are turning off the television. They're reconnecting with one another. They're gathering outside again.

Of course, designing a porch is a lot like designing a living room – but there's one big difference. It generally doesn't rain in the living room! Designers have to make porches a little hardier. This might include designing cabinets and storage on the porch – for pillows, artwork, tableware, and other elements that could be damaged by sun, wind, rain or cold.

A really terrific little chest, armoire, or bench can be the perfect place to tuck things away, depending on the porch's style. You have to ask more questions when designing a porch. How can we design the porch to protect residents from afternoon sun? Is it deep enough to enjoy during a rainstorm? (I think every porch should be deep enough to enjoy in the rain.)

These are the kinds of questions SCAD students are encouraged to ask in their studio work, while they are learning to design porches.

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**Q: Are your own porches ever truly finished?**

**A:** My porches evolve, transform, and transfigure all the time! The two porches at our home in the Savannah historic district are a perfect example. They're both in the book. My husband and I are both designers, so we're revising the porch on a weekly, and sometimes daily, basis.

Just last week, it was warm and pleasant outside, and we rearranged the lighting – we have a terrific birdcage chandelier – and threw ourselves an impromptu dinner party on the porch. In the spring and fall, if we're hosting guests indoors, we'll transform our

porches into conversation nooks for cocktails. We'll remove the porch table, place candles around the space to create a little enchantment, and revise the seating arrangement to afford sociability. This makes more room for guests to mingle, especially if we have more than a few guests coming.

We redesign the porch to suit the occasion. The upstairs porch is the same way. It's quieter, more private, with [swings](#) for the children. But if we have a lot of guests in the house, we'll open up the upstairs porch, too, sometimes setting up a banquet-length table, layered in mismatched mid-century linens, with candelabra and long picnic benches.

I like to place sofas and chairs at interesting angles to create energy and an artful imbalance. It seems that people are more willing to join a conversation if there's a point of entry. I'm always playing with the arrangement of furniture and lighting and décor, like a production designer for a new play.

After all, every social occasion has its own ambiance.

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**Q: What, if any, new accessories or design ideas did you discover while making this book that you hope to try in your porch and aerie this spring?**

**A:** You know, the best part of writing a book on interior design is getting to peek inside so many brilliant homes around the country. They say if you want to learn how to write a novel, then read.

Well, **if you want to learn how to design your perfect porch, then go look at three dozen other porches!** You fill the treasure chest of your mind with design ideas that come and coalesce into something entirely new and surprising.

I discovered quite a few new ideas while writing the book. I especially enjoyed seeing how homeowners used fabric and light in surprising ways. At one home in California, the owner had taken cantina lights and treated the rafters with a gauzy, translucent fabric – which created the most enchanting lighting effects.

The book features a number of porches that use [curtains](#) and shutters to shade the sunlight and to create more privacy (especially for city porches that are close to the sidewalk).

And, of course, when it comes to fabric for porch furniture, the Sunbrella company has been a gift from above! Before Sunbrella, porch furniture was beautiful, but either too fragile, too uncomfortable, or both. Hard-bottom rocking chairs and porch swings are a

great example.

Who doesn't love a rocking chair? But more than thirty minutes in a rocker, and you're about ready to go inside. My mother and mother-in-law both have exquisite wicker furniture. Down South, wicker is passed down like family silver, but it must be handled just so.

Some people end up using their wicker inside — in a sunroom or mixed with other furniture, just because it's so fragile.

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**Q: What makes Savannah an ideal home base for this book, and what does Savannah as a city have to teach the rest of the world about porches?**

**A:** Savannah has it all. Within twenty minutes of the city, you can find every species of American porch: urban porches, [beach porches](#), rural porches, marsh porches, river porches, grand porches, cottage porches, everything. There aren't many bad views in the Lowcountry.

Everywhere you cast an eye, there's something to capture the imagination, whether you're nature-watching or people-watching. Savannah also has the temperate weather that makes us one of the porch capitals of the world. Our springs and falls are long and lovely, providing the perfect environment for porch living.

Our great big rainstorms are a spectacle to behold from the front porch. I must say, though, that I miss the fireflies we had in Atlanta. That was its own kind of show, silently sparkling in the summer air.

Sand gnats are not quite as charming. But hey, that's what screens are for!

Savannah can always teach the world something about hospitality and entertaining, whether on a porch, courtyard, lawn, or lagoon. There's a reason they call us the Hostess City of the South. Mary Musgrove played host to General Oglethorpe. Mayor Richard Arnold played host to General Sherman.

All of us carry on that Lowcountry tradition by hosting friends and family and visitors. Entertaining is not something we only do at dinner parties in Savannah. It's a way of life.

We entertain ourselves with stories on the porch. We invite people in. We sit. We visit. We have [lemonade](#), a julep, or our all-season favorite, minted ice tea.

Savannahians can also teach the world how to relax a little. We don't fret and fuss too much about our porches. We know how to suit the porch to the home and the homeowner. We know that a porch should be a reflection – not of the zeitgeist, not of trends as diaphanous as a passing cloud – but of the human beings who live and dwell there.

All great porch design starts with people. The colors, the décor, the art, everything should reflect the porchers' values, ideals, and spirit. That's because our porches are nothing less than the settings for our best and favorite stories. Where we tell them, where we live them.

- End of Interview -

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\*\*\*\*\* Read our [book summary](#) of *Perfect Porches* \*\*\*\*\*

**This is a wonderful book for**

- Porch lovers
- Decorators and want-to-be decorators
- Designers and architects
- Lovers of outdoor spaces
- Idea seekers
- Hosts and hostesses
- History and architecture buffs
- People who cherish family and community ties
- People who value making memories
- Gifts for treasured friends and family members

Order [your copy](#) of *Perfect Porches*.

*Kind regards,*

*Mary and Dave*

[Front-Porch-Ideas-and-More.com](http://Front-Porch-Ideas-and-More.com)

