



PORTRAIT: KEVIN ALLEN. OPPOSITE: HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND. TOP RIGHT: COLLECTION OF THE MARYLAND STATE ARCHIVES.

William Adair, founder of Gold Leaf Studios in Washington, D.C., says he has his “hands constantly in the cookie jar of design histories” when conceiving frame styles. *Opposite:* Adair credits Walter Gropius, whose Massachusetts home, shown, is a national landmark, for treating architecture as fine art.

When William Adair visits a museum, he doesn’t so much study a painting as he does what borders it. “I will not even consider looking at a piece of artwork that has an improper frame,” says Adair, a frame artisan and historian, and the owner of Gold Leaf Studios in Washington, D.C. “I’m much more interested in the dynamic between the painting and the frame, and the era from which it came.” From his back-alley studio near Dupont Circle, Adair and a team of expert craftsmen and gilders work with museums, art dealers and collectors, interior designers, and private clients to repair original frames, some of which date back to the Renaissance; copy historic designs to match the pedigree of the clients’ artwork; or source original frames from a particular artist’s era. They also create their own designs. “There aren’t that many people who work in the care and connoisseurship of frames,” Adair says, adding, “Every frame that we make, we sign on the back as if it is a piece of art.” [goldleafstudios.com](http://goldleafstudios.com); 202.833.2440

Adair conserved the frames of portraits by Charles Willson Peale for the Maryland State Archives, including this one of the state’s first governor, Thomas Johnson, which hangs in the governor’s mansion.



VIEW FINDER

# WILLIAM ADAIR



**I GOT STARTED...**

In 1972, when I worked for the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery; I met influential framing masters who taught me frame history, traditional gilding techniques and design.

**DESIGN ICON:**

The founder of Bauhaus—architect and designer Walter Gropius. I appreciate his holistic approach to aesthetics.

**DREAM COLLABORATION:**

The dream’s coming true: establishing the Paul Levi International Institute for Frame Study at The College of William & Mary.

**TREND YOU’RE EXCITED BY:**

Frame collectors who hang frames within frames.

**DREAM DINNER PARTY GUESTS:**

Artists James Whistler and Edgar Degas, art critic John Ruskin, author Gertrude Stein, and painters Mary Cassatt and Vincent van Gogh—the sparks would fly!

**COVETED ITEM:**

A tabernacle frame from Siena, circa 1460, from my mentor Paul Levi’s collection.