

GULF COAST DESIGN+DECOR

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA



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2018
TOP 25
DESIGN FIRMS



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What is your interior design philosophy, and how does it apply to meeting your client's design needs? In design, the focus should be not only on the aesthetic and style, but also on comfort and livability. It is essential that our interior environments are cohesive with our lifestyle. I think this is especially important in a coastal environment, where people come to relax and enjoy life. Understanding not only aesthetic preferences but how my clients live is what help me to achieve good design.

Can you remember the first space that really made an impact on you?

My father was an architect and an abstract artist. As a child, I saw the home he designed and built in the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts. It was completely unique, contemporary but built with the natural materials of the land, and in scale with the tall trees that surrounded it. Inside, the ceilings in half of the house were three stories tall with a huge winding staircase that led to the bedrooms, made of cables and floating wood treads, wrapping around a chimney that heated the house. The bedrooms had open walls that looked down into the living space, and big, woven chair swings that hung from cables 30 feet from the ceiling into the living room. There were huge plate-glass windows that let in the light that penetrated through the surrounding trees inside. My father's huge, extraordinary modern paintings hung on the unfinished wood plank walls. The home was his, and it was the best example of pure design and innovation I have ever seen.

What inspires you inside and outside the interior design world?

Nature has always been my source of inspiration. As an artist, I have spent my life admiring the natural beauty around us and creating spaces that reflect the colors, patterns and textures of our natural surroundings.

To which city or country would you move for the design?

For me, Italy has always been the pinnacle of good design. It has a romantic culture full of history and art. I have always thought that Italians have great taste in food, fashion, design—even their language is beautiful to me. Italy was the first country I visited when I began traveling. I was offered a job with

the Florence Dance Theater in college, and I lived in Florence for a summer. It was the most magical experience. I met amazing people and traveled to extraordinary places. I have always imagined I will live there again someday.

What are three things about you that nobody knows?

1. Many people don't know about my love for martial arts and Eastern philosophy. I have practiced martial arts forms for several decades. When I am not working or with my family, I am practicing tai chi, yoga or Shaolin-Do.
2. I was an artist before studying interior design. It is hard to find time to explore fine art mediums these days, so I channel my creativity through designing interiors and my Koastal Kollection.
3. I first launched my collection to the luxury market in China in 2009, and decided in 2013 to return to the U.S. market where I am in the process of assembling new products for my Koastal Kollection.

What is your favorite space to design?

Bedrooms have always been my favorite rooms to design, and I have developed my Koastal Kollection around luxurious, comfortable bedding and bath accessories. I consider the bedroom a sanctuary—a tranquil place to rest, relax and revitalize. With the right balance of soothing, neutral elements, the bedroom can become an enchanting retreat, which is essential for maintaining harmony in all aspects of our lives.

If you could bring back one era of design, what would it be?

I think we should forge forward, but I always admired the Arts and Crafts movement because of its emphasis on natural materials, simplicity, balance and good craftsmanship.

If you could create any style home in Southwest Florida and go against the current trends here, what would you do?

I have always preferred not to follow trends. I have been an advocate for moving away from formal, ostentatious architecture since I relocated here in 2000. I am glad to see a variety of styles that are more appropriate for our subtropical environment and casual Southwest Florida lifestyle.