Design Directory

Our Guide to the World’s Top

ARCHITECTS • INTERIOR DESIGNERS
KITCHEN & BATH PRODUCTS • FURNISHINGS
RUGS • TABLETOP • LIGHTING
The individuals who have taken design to a new level

BY JORGE S. ARANGO, SAMANTHA BROOKS, ERIKA HET, WILLIAM KISSEL AND ROBIN LEE

Charles Allem, Charles Allem Designs
Located: Miami. Established: 1988
Known for: Seductive spaces and "never making the same mistake twice."
Design philosophy: "Life is so hectic that our personal environments have become extremely important. In order to get the optimum results out of life, you have to start with a beautiful room."
305.438.9757, www.charlesallemdesigns.com

Ann Ascher, Ann Ascher Interiors
Located: Los Angeles. Established: 1965
Known for: Elegant, traditional and detail-oriented interiors, and the renovation and design of JFK's former hotel suite at the Carlyle, New York.
Strategies for success: "There are two very important things that I've learned over the years: Always, always listen to your client. And you cannot pay enough attention to the details. No detail is too small to pay attention to in this business."
310.279.1189, www.anneascherinteriors.com

Stephen Bastone, Stephen Bastone Inc.
Known for: Old-world opulence applied to interiors in a sexy, modern way. A look achieved through sumptuous layering of fabrics—especially closely researched antique textiles and trims—and custom details such as hand-blocked document wallpapers, rare comme des garçons furniture, custom beadwork and exquisite hardware.
My ideal client: "Someone who understands the line between stylish and chic. Anyone can afford to be stylish, but chic comes from experience and from living a certain lifestyle. It's someone who can take an incredible JAR piece of jewelry and rock it with jeans and spike heels."
646.732.3580

Joan Behnke, Joan Behnke & Associates
Known for: Knowledgeable and skilled restoration of historic California homes.
What has influenced your work: "Before I was a designer, I was a dancer—modern and ballet—in New York, which gave me a tremendous amount of discipline. My first job after design school was with Erika Braanson, who did work for the royal family of Saudi Arabia. That gave me great exposure to a range of unique and beautiful things that most people don't normally come across so early in their career."
Best advice received: "The chairman of MGM told me that money can come and go, but you only have one shot at maintaining your reputation. I always tell my staff to be conscious of that and do right by the client."
310.446.7738, www.joanbehnke.com

Samuel Botero, Samuel Botero & Associates, Inc.
Known for: A deft and unabashed use of color—whether working in modern or traditional idiom—and interiors that are intelligent and beautiful, that solve clients' needs and "allow for people's lives to unfold in them. Unlike dictatorial designers, he respects clients' positions because they personalize a room."