Robb Report

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TOP 40 INTERIOR DESIGNERS

The individuals who have taken design to a new level

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

Charles Allem, Charles Allem Designs

Located: Miami **Established:** 1988

Known for: Seductive spaces and "never making the same movie 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.annascherinteriors.com

Stephen Bastone, Stephen Bastone Inc.

Located: New York **Established:** 1993

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 trim—and custom details such as hand-blocked document wallpapers, rare connoisseur-quality 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

Located: Los Angeles **Established:** 1998

Known for: Knowledgeable and skillful 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 Brunson, 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.

Located: New York **Established:** 1980

Known for: A deft and unabashed use of color—whether working in modern or traditional idioms—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' possessions because they personalize a room.

LEFT: GREY CRAWFORD; OPPOSITE PAGE: NATHAN KIRKMAN