

A HOUSE THAT SINGS

Whether their perspective is graphic, contemporary or expresses a timeless grace, three interior designers tell us what drew them into their profession and what they've loved about their clients.

BY LEE CATALUNA



You've been inspired by gorgeous photos in magazines and books. But when you look around at your own less-than-perfect palace, you realize that even though you're ready to make changes, you have no idea where to start. Perhaps it's time to work with a professional. A formally trained designer with a portfolio decades in the making can transform your home's potential into a stunning reality. We talked with three of the desert's most admired designers to find out how they discovered they had the magic to conjure up beautiful homes and how they channel these powers for your good.



A vivid color palette by designer Christopher Kennedy, shown opposite with one of his signature pieces, is expressed above through upholstery and art, as well as a few contemporary accessories. Here he mixes it up to suggest a carefree seaside getaway in a once-formal 1920s Spanish Colonial home.

INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE

Christopher Kennedy knew from the time he was 7 years old that he wanted to build houses. That was in the 1970s, an era that is reflected in Kennedy's style. "The 1970s were a historic time here in the desert," he says. "My designs harken back to those days, but with a fresh spin for today's lifestyle."

Kennedy has had his own firm for seven years, and although he is based in Palm Springs, he does projects all over the country and in Canada since many of his clients have multiple homes. They come to him for their home in the desert and he ends up working on their home in the mountains, at the beach or in town.

"My clients taught me to have faith in myself. When I started, I was in my 20s. Some of my clients were early fans and have been long-time supporters," Kennedy says. When designing someone's living space, Kennedy believes a deep bond is formed. There are discussions about aesthetics and function, but also about hopes and dreams, fears and wants. "We get to know our clients so well that we know where they keep their socks and underwear."

Kennedy's clients come to him for homes that are both contemporary and luxurious. "I stay away from designs that are fussy, overwrought, or have that Old English look," he says. He is also careful to balance his own aesthetic with his client's lifestyle and personality.

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Kennedy continues the blues-reds-and-neutrals color scheme and mix of styles throughout the house from the preceding page to tie the principal rooms together visually.



To keep the rich tones of the ceiling in this contemporary home from dominating the large open space, Kennedy adds accents of vibrant color in the furnishings and artworks. Below, he turns his hand to designing a wedding for clients.

He has launched his own line of furniture, a line that is both cleanly modern and beautifully appointed with names like “the Audrey sofa” and “the Robert chair.” The furniture line will be sold at stores across the country.

Recently, Kennedy took on a completely different kind of design project. Clients were getting married, and because they loved working with him and trusted him to translate their ideas into a cohesive whole, they asked him to design their wedding. “We did the entire look of the wedding, from the flowers, the décor, the setting, the total look and feel,” he says. “It was a gorgeous wedding at the Indian Canyons Golf Resort.”

PRESERVING WHAT'S CHERISHED

Snuffie Adams didn't follow the traditional path into the design business. She was a client and dear friend of Steve Chase (they were so close that he became godfather to her second daughter) and she so impressed him with her eye for design, he hired her.

“Working with him was like getting a Ph.D in design,” she says. Though they were best friends, Chase put Adams through a rigorous apprenticeship. She worked for him from 1980 to 1992. “On the job, he made me cry every day,” she recalls, though she laughs about it now. It is a medal of honor to have been reduced to tears by the great Steve Chase.

Chase taught her to make the design of a home flow and to make sure each room “sings.” “That was how he put it,” she says.

“One of my fortes is to create livable designs using the client's own items as different accents,” she says. “I'm not one of those designers who comes in and throws everything away. Steve taught me that. He taught me to incorporate pieces the client already owns and loves into the design.” Her trademark is a home that feels both comfortably lived-in but fresh. “I want people to say about my design, ‘This feels so warm!’ ”

Adams has a Bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Southern

California, something that serves her well in her work, which has included designing more than 30 homes within Eldorado Country Club in Indian Wells. “You have to be a psychologist to be a designer,” she says. “You get into people's lives; you know about everything. You have to help them make choices.”

