

## HOME

STYLEMAKER SPOTLIGHT: KELLEY FLYNN

# Room to breathe in warm spaces

By Anh-Minh Le

An appreciation of art and design was instilled in Kelley Flynn at a young age. When she was 6 years old, she started studying painting and drawing. "I grew up in an artistic household, with an industrial designer father," she says. "And beautiful furniture, antiques, objects and art were a part of my upbringing." With a degree in architecture from the University of Michigan, Flynn began her career in architecture and set design in Chicago and Boston. She relocated to San Francisco 20 years ago and decided to pursue a bachelor's in interdisciplinary art. But her continued work with various architecture firms ignited a new professional interest: interior design.

"I had always loved interiors but had seen interior design as a more personal pursuit — until I realized that it was the natural expression and extension of everything I had learned about art, design and environment," explains Flynn. So she returned to school once more, studying interior design at UC Berkeley.

In 2007, Flynn opened her practice, Kelley Flynn Interior Design ([www.kelleyflynn.com](http://www.kelleyflynn.com)). In 2011 and 2012, she was selected for the Children's Support League's Heart of the Home Tour, and this year marks her inaugural participation in the San Francisco Decorator Showcase, which runs through Memorial Day. "I was inspired to transform the most modest room in the house into a space that is beautiful and elegant," she says of the top-floor powder room. The black-and-cream scheme features a pleated and shirred fabric treatment on the walls and wallpaper in a bold graphic on the ceiling.

"I don't limit my viewpoint to one style, but work with clients to incorporate what has personal meaning and beauty for them," says Flynn of her approach to design. "I like to create rooms that are warm, balanced and have room to breathe."

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Russell Yip /  
The Chronicle

## A few favorites



Chi Fang Photography

## San Francisco Decorator

**Showcase:** "I love beautiful textiles and am continually inspired by the impact fabric can make on a room. For my space in this year's showcase, the Kelly Wearstler fabric-covered walls were the starting point for the whole room." ([www.decoratorshowcase.org](http://www.decoratorshowcase.org))

**Art:** "Incorporating art that reflects my client's taste and budget is so important in setting a tone. Slate Contemporary, a gallery in uptown Oakland, focuses on emerging and mid-career Bay Area artists, and owner/art consultant Danielle Fox has a discerning eye for selecting pieces to match a room." ([www.slatecontemporary.com](http://www.slatecontemporary.com))



Chi Fang Photography

**Mirrors:** "I often feel a room is not complete without a beautiful mirror. I love antique mirrors, but if I'm shopping for something new, I frequently check out Made Goods. They have so many beautiful mirrors and are always coming up with new designs." ([www.madegoods.com](http://www.madegoods.com))

## The Flynn cheat sheet

**Practice patience:** "Invest in quality pieces. Instead of simply buying furniture to fill a space, wait to find special, unique pieces that really speak to you. There is nothing more satisfying than truly loving the furniture and objects you live with — even after years of use."

**Small wonder:** "Small spaces, contrary to what most people think, can be an opportunity to do something very bold and dramatic. Don't be afraid to use dark colors or patterns. I'm a fan of Jocelyn Warner's wallpapers for adding pattern." ([www.jocelynwarner.com](http://www.jocelynwarner.com))

**The big picture:** "I have learned over time that clients can have a tendency to focus on one element, piece or material in a room, rather than seeing how all the colors, textures and shapes work together. My suggestion is to keep an open mind and focus on the feeling or atmosphere you want to achieve. Looking at all your materials together or putting together image boards can help to keep your overall aesthetic objective in mind."

**Custom creations:** "The Bay Area — home to artisans, craftspeople and wonderful sources — makes using a custom shop for that one-of-a-kind piece affordable and accessible. For my showcase room, I had local blacksmith and metalworker Shawn Lovell create the perfect wall-hung table, sized exactly for my space." ([www.smetalworks.com](http://www.smetalworks.com))

**Details, details:** "Accessories, lighting and artwork are what make a house feel like a home! Don't stop at the furniture. I like to shop consignment shops and antique sales for unique finds and accents. The White Elephant Sale in Oakland is a favorite — gorgeous items, and all of the proceeds benefit the Oakland Museum."