

DEFINING STYLE

WE CAUGHT UP WITH THREE OF CHICAGO'S TOP FEMALE DESIGNERS TO GET THEIR TAKE ON WHAT MAKES A PERFECT ROOM — FROM COLOR AND TEXTURE TO ART AND ACCESSORIES.



BETH BOYD: THE COMPOSER

It's quite a stretch to go from lawyer to designer, but that's exactly what Beth Boyd did. Since launching Wiley Designs in 1998, Boyd has become known for well-composed, tailored spaces that maintain a balance of clean lines, textures and strategic color. Her goal is to help clients find their own aesthetic. "A lot of people are unsure how to articulate what they want," she says. "So just talking to them and drawing them out make a difference."

Ultimately, says Boyd, it's all about surrounding clients with the things that are meaningful to them to make them feel connected to their environment.

One of Boyd's most notable projects came in 2009, when she invested in a 100-plus-year-old house on Fullerton Avenue. "We gutted the house and completely redesigned the interior," she says. Months after selling the property, Boyd was contacted by the new homeowners, who wanted her to do their interior design and had no idea she was involved in the renovation. "It was a fun piece of synchronicity," she says.

ARTFUL DESIGN: "Last year we moved and opened an art gallery space in conjunction with our office. Our goal is to bring in work by artists and designers in a variety of media and to host events that encourage a conversation with the community around us and support art and design."

RUG REVOLUTION: "There's been a really interesting evolution in rug design lately. Certainly, Persian and oriental rugs are classic and wonderful, but there's been a great movement in artist-designed rugs."

CEILING CHIC: "Don't ignore the ceiling. It's an opportunity to make everything else in the space feel completely pulled together. White can be fine, but why not do something more interesting?"



JESSICA LAGRANGE: THE CLASSICIST

When Jessica Lagrange takes on new clients, her first goal is to understand how they live. “What is their lifestyle?” she says. “How do they entertain? The more I know about my clients, the better I can tailor the project to their needs.”

Lagrange eliminates her own personal aesthetic from the mix as much as possible. “I purposely don’t have a signature style,” she says. “I pride myself on the fact that everything we do is geared to the individual.”

That said, Lagrange steers her clients away from the trendy whenever possible, guiding them instead toward classic design. “Interior design is a huge investment, so it needs to age well,” she says. “I help my clients choose thoughtful, classic pieces that they’re never going to grow tired of.”

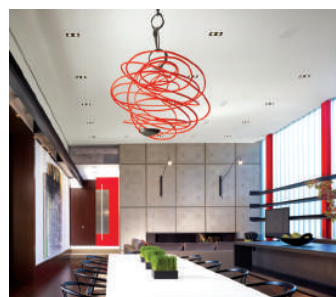
A graduate of the interior architecture program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a veteran of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Lagrange opened her own design firm in 1998, focusing on custom residential design for a wide variety of clients. The projects themselves are equally diverse, from the 30,000-square-foot new construction home in Lincoln Park she’s currently working on to a sumptuous full-floor apartment in the old Playboy Mansion that Lagrange recently brought back to its former glory.

LIGHTEN UP: “I’m getting tired of dark woods, dark floors and dark furniture. Lighter bleached woods are softer and work so well with neutrals, which are always in.”

POWDER ROOM POWER: “One of my favor-

ite spaces to design is the powder room. It’s such a small space you can really take a risk. We once covered the walls of a powder room in gold leaf behind glass (Verre Églomisé). It looked like the inside of a jewel box.”

SCALE SAVVY: “Scale and proportion are really important. There’s so much oversized furniture out there. You have to remember, things look different in showrooms from how they do in your home. If a piece of furniture is out of proportion, it just won’t look right. And before you get it in the living room, it has to fit in the freight elevator first.”



ILENE CHASE: THE ARTIST

Ilene Chase grew up with artist parents, studied art history and textiles at Indiana University, and then became an artist herself, creating rugs and oversized murals for clients throughout the 1990s. She also worked at a kitchen and bath showroom, gaining hands-on experience in what she calls “behind-the-scenes functional design.”

“In design, every inch counts,” she says. “Perfect placement and spacing are requirements for all my projects.”

When her art clients started asking her to transform more than just the walls of their homes, Chase launched her own interior design firm 20 years ago. In a sense, she never stopped being an artist. “Almost everything I do for my clients, I make myself,” she says. “I only buy what I have to — I don’t

cookie cut. I love to take a room and texturize it, twist it and give it something unique.”

Whether engaged in a historic remodel of a landmark home in Old Town built after the Chicago Fire that involved numerous trips to Paris, or her most current project — a new construction 23,000-square-foot home in Northfield with a 55-foot pool and cabana in the backyard (not to mention a basement housing both a beauty shop and bar from the owner’s former hotel in Colorado) — Chase focuses her artist’s eye on creating unique, personalized spaces that meet her clients’ needs and never go out of style.

MODERN MIX: “Right now, industrial mid-century modern is taking over mid-century modern. We are leaning towards more natural materials and reclaimed woods, which adds an earthy warmth to cold modern glass and metals. I love pairing medias together!”



GOODBYE GRAY: “Gray and white color schemes, plastered over every single shelter magazine, no longer look fresh to me. There’s no individuality, no uniqueness, and no personality to them anymore.”

SCULPTURAL STYLE: “I can make a home look so much higher end with applied moldings. Picture molding gives dimension to flat walls, and great paint can make a piece of furniture look like it’s from Italy. Textures do the same thing. The wrong material can make a sofa look cheap and dated, but cover it in black velvet and suddenly it’s rich and dramatic.”

