



Trend: Interior Architecture

By Dorothee Junkin

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Dorothee Junkin is the creative force of DJDS, creating unique designs with her keen eye and intuitive sense of style. Growing up in one of Germany's wine regions along the idyllic Rhine River near Frankfurt/Main, Dorothee was very early on fascinated by the idea of becoming an architect and designer. In 2003 she completed her Part 1 in Architecture in Germany before moving to New York to gain her first professional experience on commercial projects at KPF Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates. She continued her professional experience back in Germany at GMP Von Gerkan Marg & Partner, Frankfurt. In 2004 Dorothee continued with her studies in Switzerland and finished her Part 2 in 2006 with a Master's degree of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, ETH Zurich. Shortly after, she joined acclaimed international architects Foster + Partners in London. In 2009, Dorothee formed her first design studio "Architecta Interiors". In 2012 Dorothee relocated to New York. Architecture is at the root of great design and Dorothee shares her experience of providing both services to her clients.

For me, working on projects requiring services of interior architecture and interior decoration has been a process of constant change over the past five years. One meets very different clients with different personalities, aims and aspirations and no project ever has the same scope of work or timelines. Some clients have a developed style and taste of their own and are looking for professional advice or a second opinion to achieve the best possible result. Other clients don't know where to go from and are looking for someone to help them through every step of the process.

Clients have become more and more savvy gathering information from the internet and other media, and are now



Above: Vero Beach House Foyer

looking into service and cost comparisons. They have an increasing desire to understand how much the project will cost them and what they can expect as an end result. While a few years ago a designer may have been hired and seen more as an artist providing a unique service, the understanding of the designer seems to have changed and the artistic aspect of our work is not always in the main focus anymore. Managing the schedule, budget and foremost the client's expectations are cornerstones to gain the client's trust and then enables us to actually embark on the journey of developing the appropriate and individual design for every client.

During the initial stages of the process I always do a thorough walk through an existing property or analyse the space the architect started to outline for a new build property. I like to get involved as early as possible to get a feel for the flow of the space, zoning, primary and connecting spaces, light conditions, etc. and then evaluate this in relation to the client's specific requirements and individual preferences. Furniture layout studies often help clients to understand how the space could be organised and used, as they often can't quite grasp the actual space in its entirety, with the real-to-scale dimensions and proportions, or see its weaknesses or potentials. I've even gone so far and put tape and little markers on the floor of an existing property to help the client get a feel for the room size and I never go to a client meeting without my tape measure. Clients need to understand proportions early on to ensure they will feel comfortable in the resulting space. In existing properties I try to work with the context.



Above: Vero Beach House stairs

Sometimes it may be required to adjust wall positions, sometimes a quirky recess could be turned into a great concealed storage. Most clients tend to not have enough storage, so I like to find discrete spaces for it and allow for practical built-ins and walk-in closets where possible. I like subtly defined and clean outlined spaces linking one area with the other. Natural light and a well considered lighting scheme are key too. Light guides us, draws us in and creates atmosphere on a rather subconscious level. Materiality comes next. Texture, grain, colour, sheen and weaves all create a visual context as well as a sensuous experience. The

way a wood floor feels when you walk on it barefoot may not be something you consciously notice as pleasant, but it contributes to your overall perception of the space. Especially surfaces like floors and counter spaces should not only look great, they should feel pleasant to the touch as well.

For a recent project of mine in Vero Beach, Florida, I was brought on board while the contractor had already started building the shell of the property. I quickly had a clear vision of the wall finishes, particularly on the ground floor and in the double-height spaces and convinced the client to eliminate paint finishes and go for beautiful stone slabs and wood panels instead. The

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spaces are very large and filled with light, so the stone and wood can really be appreciated over large surfaces, displaying their unique and subtle texture. We had to change the wall studding and built-up in order to install the materials, but it was well worth the effort, as a paint-finish wall would have provided a totally different atmosphere and feel in the room.

Other interior architectural features I particularly like to work with are stairs and fireplaces. For the entrance foyer of the Vero Beach residence I designed a sculptural wood stair, which is a functional feature and highlight one sees right upon entering the property. I think this architectural element is more than just a stair and adds a lot of individuality to an otherwise transitional space. A feature fireplace was used to structure a large double aspect family room and divide the space into a dining and sitting area, while at the same time creating a focal point when walking down a long passage towards the room.

During the design process, clients increasingly ask for options to compare design and prices driven by a desire to be able to make informed decisions. I have presented several options within an established budget to clients and they'd still contemplate the options based on the differences in cost rather than to go with the design they liked most. Very few clients don't look at the cost and just follow their personal preferences. A designer needs to understand that most clients expect to be educated and wowed simultaneously. Costs can add up quickly and some clients can't quite envision the possible results, so it is really important to enable them to see and fully understand their options. I never rush clients into a decision, even when the

way to go seems obvious to me. Only a client's confident and conscious decision will give him or her the peace of mind to move forward with the project without regrets. It's all about balancing the scope of work and project timelines while making sure the client is and remains fully on board.

Every single one of my projects is different and while I of course have my own style and preferences, I know I need to step back at times, listen closely to the clients and then help them to create their individual home rather than just to follow my personal instinct. The work is

actually more interesting that way and the projects tend to become richer and multi-layered, fuelled by the client's and my personality, in an intensive and diverse dialogue. You spend a lot of time together and can thus give every detail the consideration and thoughtfulness it deserves. Once it's all coming together in the end, everyone is excited to see what we achieved together and the clients can take ownership and be proud of their property after having been part of the design process all along the way.

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Above: Vero Beach House bedroom ensuite