

ATLANTA HOMES™ & LIFESTYLES

Kitchens!

THE CITY'S
BEST DESIGNS

JANUARY 2011
ATLANTAHOMESMAG.COM

\$4.95US

0 1 >



DECORATING NOW
NEW YEAR, NEW LOOKS

10 UNDER 40

Atlanta's New Tastemakers



1) Courtney Giles

Her work has been described as, at once, sophisticated and edgy. Indeed, it's designer Giles' keen eye for the unexpected that adds individuality to her rooms. "I love to mix antiques with contemporary art, creating a layered look," she says. Giles knew at an early age what she wanted to do with her life. Because her father built houses for a living, there were always blueprints around and design seemed a natural fit. Armed with a degree in interior environments from Auburn University, she spent eight years working with Carter Kay Interiors, then further honed her skills in New York City before launching her own firm in 2008. Giles has worked on design projects throughout the Southeast and as far afield as the Netherlands.

2) David VanArsdale

VanArsdale founded the multidisciplinary design firm People of Resource in 2009. But his accomplishments date back much further. Prior to founding the business, VanArsdale taught industrial design at Georgia Tech and was creative director and co-founder of thing farm. "I came to Georgia Tech planning to study physics, but soon found industrial design and never turned back," he explains. There have been awards along the way, including a Downtown Design Excellence award from Central Atlanta Progress. But, he says, "the idea of 'a greatest accomplishment' doesn't really matter to me. Any chance to design, and feel the rush of solution, is the greatest accomplishment until the next. If I could do good work for the rest of my life, I would consider that a dream realized."

3) Tug Helmer

A self-described "hard-charging, progressive-minded, eccentric-yet-polite and formal Southern man," Helmer came home to Atlanta after graduating from the London campus of American College, focusing on commercial real estate. Helmer recently found himself caught up in another business, too. "Through real estate ventures in North Carolina, I met a logger who, among other things, makes kiln-dried firewood, and he encouraged me to do it here. Despite Atlanta being in a dense forest, firewood has been underserved here, so I formed Sam's Kiln-Dried Firewood with the idea of professionalizing this cottage industry." What's more, Sam's is restoring several railroad repair buildings in Mechanicsville to bring the pre-Civil War locomotive complex back to life.

4) Lee Kleinhelter

She's an unabashed "obsessive compulsive stylist," taking on anything in sight—right down to her son's toy box. "It's an illness I've happened to parlay into a career," laughs Kleinhelter, owner of Pieces, the Buckhead hot spot known for clean-lined furnishings with a twist. "I'm just passionate about the visual; I really, really love good design." This trailblazer was only in her 20s when she realized her passion for styling and product, as well as her penchant to reimagine vintage finds. "Over the past six years it's just evolved. We've learned a lot of things the hard way, by trial and error, but mostly it's been a smash hit and we've developed a following that I'm grateful for. I made the leap because I was young and naive enough to think I could do it. Thank goodness I did."

5) Ryan Hughes

After graduating from UGA with a degree in business administration, Hughes followed his passion for interior design by accepting a position at Ainsworth-Noah & Associates. After analyzing the industry for several years, he recognized a need for unique products in the market. The result of his research is the new 4,000-square-foot R. Hughes showroom, filled with collections exclusive to the area. "The vision literally came to me in the middle of the night; there were so many great products not yet in Atlanta and I wanted to bring them here in an outside-the-box concept," says Hughes. "I've always loved White Provision and when I saw the space it just felt right to me. The lines that I carry aren't those that would normally be in a traditional design center, so it was a happy marriage."



6) **Mali Azima**

While in high school, Azima toyed with the idea of photography as a profession, but ended up pursuing a degree in fashion design instead. While working for Dallas interior designer Paul Garzotto, fate stepped in. "He had hired a photographer to take shots of store merchandise but I didn't think they were good. My boyfriend at the time encouraged me to take some and, before long, we were designing his advertising." Not long after, they were designing advertising for other clients, too. These days, her interior photography is published internationally. "I try to capture energy in my photos," she explains. "I want people to feel like they're in the room, to feel the tension created by the objects within. It's important to move people."

7) **Brian Patrick Flynn**

"I'm a television producer-turned-professional decorator," says Flynn of his circuitous path to the design world. "I have absolutely zero formal training in design but, when I was in college, I got an amazing internship that turned into a paid job producing prime-time news. Months later, I took a job behind the scenes assisting designers on a home makeover show. Now I produce broadcast and online design shows during the day [Movie & a Makeover on TBS], and take on my own clients nights and weekends. Basically, I'm a bona fide decorating addict." What's more, Flynn—with his unapologetic, cinematic and playful sense of style—is the brains behind DecorDemon.com, the wildly popular design website, and also writes editorial and blog posts for hgtv.com.

8) **Dawn M. Bennett**

After graduating cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts from Clemson University and obtaining her Master of Architecture from Washington University in St. Louis, Bennett launched her career at TVS before joining Harrison Design Associates as a project architect. Today, in addition to running her own practice—and being one of the few female architects practicing in Atlanta—Bennett is a principal at Splice Design, a firm that offers a complete range of services including architecture, communication, research, strategy and urban design. Bennett considers herself a modernist but "I do a little bit of everything," she says. "Working at Harrison taught me about traditional style and proportion. It's always better to break the rules [of design] once you understand the rules."

9) **Niki Papadopoulos**

Papadopoulos' work has been described as "bold, brilliant and inspired," for which she gives much credit to her father. "I know that my creativity and work ethic are derived directly from him. It has been just the two of us since I was 10 and he always told me to do what makes me happy." Professionally speaking, that includes a career she loves—with Mark Williams Design Associates—and a blog, yummyscrumptious.blogspot.com, where she regularly shares insight on her world of design. Not bad for a former aspiring fashion designer. "I woke up one day and decided to change my major," she says. "It was completely impulsive. I walked into the interior design department and thought, 'I might like this.'"

10) **Amy D. Morris**

Morris' résumé reads like a "Who's Who of interior design in Atlanta." While studying at the Art Institute of Atlanta, Morris interned with the renowned firm Gandy-Peace, which piqued her interest in contemporary work. Then, after receiving her B.F.A. in interior design, Morris worked with Barbara Westbrook for five years. That experience paved the way for Morris' own firm, Amy D. Morris Interiors, where this purveyor of style specializes in transitional design: classic rooms with a fresh, sophisticated spin. Since being named as a 2009 *AH&L* Bath of the Year contest winner (and being featured on two subsequent covers since), "things just keep getting better," says Morris. "But everything that's happening right now is so great, I can't imagine it getting any better!"