

LOS ANGELES **CONFIDENTIAL**

THE
REAL ESTATE
& DESIGN
ISSUE

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ON HAVING IT ALL

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THE FANTASTIC FOUR

Meet the decorators whose personal styles are shaping LA interior design.

By *Marin Preske*

INTERIOR DESIGN in Los Angeles has always been something of a motley affair. Mixed influences in a transient town full of diverse architecture don't exactly yield a defining style. But in the process of channeling this city's varied traits, four designers are helping to forge its aesthetic. Whether they draw on the glamour of Beverly Hills or the eclectic edge of West Hollywood, California eco-consciousness or a bohemian spirit that extends well beyond Topanga, the following are locals to know.



NATHAN TURNER

Self-confessed collect-aholic Nathan Turner has amassed what might be described as a globetrotter's treasure chest in West Hollywood. In one corner of his eponymous décor shop, stacks of vintage Suzani textiles line an antique armoire; in another, handmade ceramics top a Provençal table. Photo prints adorn the walls. Cowhide ottomans embellish the floor. "A minimalist I am not," says the Californian. "I love layers, a mixed Anglo-ethnic look." For Turner that translates into a fusion of patterns, tones and pieces with history that collectively yield an eclectic, high-low effect well suited to the neighborhood in which he's based. He may be a man on a mission to bring a certain joie de vivre westward, but Turner was recently introduced to the world of green design while helping Adrian Grenier with his Los Feliz home. Turner outfitted Grenier's LEED-certified pad with renewable materials such as jute and flax and used touches like fallen-tree stumps for seating. "There's a ton of resources out there," says Turner, who also designs a line of furniture for Elite Leather Company. Perhaps a sign of new boutique booty to come.

Mary McDonald



MARY MCDONALD

Los Angeles might be known for its airy beach houses and canyon bungalows, but to think of the city as solely a beacon of casual living would overlook those who favor all of Tinseltown's glamour. Enter Mary McDonald, a Brentwood native who likes to put the posh in Angeleno interiors. "I'm kind of the odd man out here," she says, referring to her preference for primness in laid-back LA. "I love something formal in every room." McDonald, a former milliner who once made couture-style hats for high-end boutiques such as Maxfield, is equal parts drama and decorum. Though she may temper spaces with modern touches—a bit of Lucite here, some stainless steel there—McDonald has a penchant for old-world glamour and its furnishings (think Chinoiserie wallpaper, elegant draperies and 18th-century French furniture). "I prefer the faded elegance of days gone by," explains the interior designer, who now aptly calls Beverly Hills home. With a new book, *Mary McDonald: Interiors*, due out from Rizzoli later this year and her line of '40s- and neoclassically inspired lamps for Robert Abbey, Inc. debuting this spring, McDonald has a lot to look forward to. Still, it seems she just can't help but feel nostalgic for the past.

KARI WHITMAN

Kari Whitman will be the first to admit she's a tree hugger. But that doesn't mean the Earth-minded interior designer is prone to daisy chains and patchouli oil. It's quite the opposite really. With an A-list client base (Jessica Alba and Emilio Estevez for starters), she mingles superstar swank with eco-activist credibility and often makes it hard to differentiate between the two. For example, Whitman outfitted Alba's entire backyard in ForeverLawn, a synthetic turf made from recycled plastic. "It looks just like grass," says the designer, who favors a modern eclectic aesthetic, but one that is environmentally responsible above all else. The result is a lush, manicured exterior that eliminates pesticides and water use. Whitman's also a fan of green drywall, non-VOC paint and Trex—a recycled-plastic and wood-fiber alternative to traditional wood. "It's not hard to be green," says Whitman, a onetime actress who founded Ace of Hearts dog-rescue foundation. In a true Hollywood story, Whitman once sat next to musician Don Henley at a dinner party. She was unhappy with acting and had recently started doing some design work; he was in the market for a decorator. They decided to give it a go. Since then Whitman has had her own shows on WE: Women's Entertainment network and the Discovery Channel, garnered a celeb following and launched products such as eco-friendly dog beds with filling made from—what else—recycled plastic bottles.



Kari Whitman



Amy Kehoe
and Todd Nickey

TODD NICKEY AND AMY KEHOE

Todd Nickey and Amy Kehoe, the duo behind the decorating firm Nickey Kehoe, Inc., know that sometimes two is better than one. "We have individual styles, but they overlap and are complementary," says Nickey, whose tastes tend toward the rustic and daring. The more refined, modern-leaning Kehoe adds, "It's great because we don't bring the same thing to the process." Since its 2004 launch, Nickey Kehoe, Inc. has been crafting coolly offbeat interiors for fans, including actor Mark Ruffalo and his wife, Sunrise, as well as current client Natalie Portman. The focus is on spaces that are as functional for the client's lifestyle

as they are stylish (the Ruffalos have three kids). Their LA home-furnishings store is an extension of their grown-up bohemian mien—handpicked vintage gems and custom-made pieces mixed together. And though the two met in New York, LA is the place they identify with most. "The focus is less decorated and more livable here," says Nickey. Of course, those East Coast roots have to manifest themselves somehow. "It's embedded in us," says Kehoe of their affinity for timeworn pieces in up-to-the-minute LA. "We bring an inherited feel to all the newness." The results seem to bridge the best of both worlds. ★