

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN

## Designers Tell All - Mark Boone

TEXT BY

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### **When I begin with a new client, I always...**

Make time to get to know the clients. I learn about how they live, how they spend their time, how they interact with one another, how they envision using the proposed project. The initial meeting is a bit like going on a semi-blind date. They're somewhat familiar with our work when they call us, but it all boils down to chemistry and trust. You become very close to clients during the process—better make sure you like each other.

### **The mistake most people make when doing their own designing is...**

Lacking focus of the big picture. Trying to work out every fantasy all at once. Watching too many "home improvement" shows on cable. In most cases, the term "home improvement" is definitely an oxymoron—like "jumbo shrimp." A glue gun in the wrong hands is a very dangerous thing.

### **Clients can make the design process go more smoothly by...**

Being decisive, realistic, focused. Each project and client offer their own challenges and opportunities. It's my job as designer to act as tour guide and interpreter, taking my client's needs, desires and dreams and turning them into reality.

### **The most unusual request from a client was...**

Getting furnishings into a house that was 125 steps down from Pacific Coast Highway on the side of a cliff. We had a crane swing the pieces over the cliff and down to the house.

### **For someone who wants a big look on a small budget today...**

Buy some paint. It's remarkable how color can transform a space. Try a few different shades and color samples on the wall before taking the final plunge. The other thing that's easy, inexpensive and makes a big difference is simply installing dimmers on your lighting. It allows for an instant mood change—and without medication!

### **One of the best things right now to collect for an investment is...**

Asian antiques. I love their timeless simplicity, wonderful patinas and functionality. The age lends depth and character to spaces. They look great in both traditional and contemporary settings. They also tend to

be very affordable. I have a beautiful antique red-lacquered cabinet in my living room that I'll never get rid of.

**In the area of home electronics, people are asking for...**

The discreet "kitchen sink": theater-quality media systems, sophisticated lighting controls, the ability to monitor the house (or simply enjoy the view!) from anywhere in the world—all at the touch of a button, tucked away and easy to use.

**In the next ten years the most important thing in design or architecture will be...**

Accommodating all of the new technology thoughtfully and attractively.

**My biggest design mistake was...**

Relying on blueprints for as-built measurements. I was installing a client's bedroom in La Jolla, and the bed wouldn't fit in the door, or the window. Subsequently, the custom-made night tables were too long for the bed wall. I was blessed with a client who had a good sense of humor. She simply smiled and said, "Let's just call today a dress rehearsal." It was a very expensive lesson.

**My favorite room to design is...**

The powder room. It's a distillation of the house's design soul. It can be more focused in its use of unusual materials and drama. It's the one place in the house where one or one's friends really find themselves alone and up close to the house in a relatively small space. I like it to be a bit of a surprise, like the inside of a jewel box. "Wow" is key, but a little goes a long way.

**I change my own interiors...**

Fairly infrequently. I spend my life changing the interiors of others. It's comforting coming home to some serene consistency. My home isn't large, so as I buy art or a new piece of furniture, I edit my collection, usually putting something into my warehouse for later.

**There are many rules designers and architects should bear in mind. one is...**

At the end of the day, it's the client's home. After we've all gone back to our own homes, they remain, creating their own life there.

**The order I follow when I design is...**

Start from the ground up. I like to start with backgrounds of stone, wood flooring, good rugs, and then layer the furnishings. As in life, everything's better with a good foundation.

**Every home must have...**

A great, comfortable chair, a good lamp (with a dimmer, of course) and a table nearby to put your drink.

**My personal dream house would be...**

Graciously scaled, with views of the sea, plenty of sunlight, room for friends.... On the coast of Italy wouldn't be bad. Can I include a chef?

**Who or what has influenced my style...**

Certainly my business partner, Mimi London, has had the biggest impact. Her great sense of scale, appreciation for honest materials and design, and her willingness to take risks have influenced me greatly. This year marks our 20th year working together.

**Three essentials for entertaining are...**

Great friends, great food, great music. (Plus plenty of ice!)

**For inspiration, I go to...**

A lot of places! I don't think inspiration can be forced or taught. It just happens no matter where you are. I've been inspired while traveling through Europe, walking on a beautiful beach, even when catching a train to a job site or taking a shower.