

designer spotlight: alison pickart



With two decades of experience, and projects completed throughout the United States and Europe, Alison Pickart brings a unique perspective to the art and process of Interior Design.



How did you discover your passion for design?

How did you discover your passion for design? I don't think I ever woke up and "discovered" it... Design and (the obsession with) spatial layout has always been an innate thing that I would "do"... even as a kid, I needed to move things into the right "space"... adjusting furniture has been a habit of mine since I was strong enough to move things... as an adult (when I am not doing it during the day for my actual job), this now plays out in hotel rooms and usually at friends' houses after a couple glasses of wine! I also have always had a serious obsession with understanding how things worked from the inside out... learning how to reupholster furniture or wire a sconce was a stepping stone to understanding how to actually design a piece of furniture or lighting.

What is your favorite decorative object at home?

An antique Grandfather Clock from the early 1700s... it came with my husband, and lives in our stairwell... it is the only thing in our house that cannot be moved, and it makes me happy to see it every day!

Is design an art or a science?

Design is both. Good design is an art form that is primarily instinctual... however, understanding spaces requires an understanding of the science of proportion, scale, and social functioning.

Do you have any go-to color or pattern combinations?

Olive green and turquoise is one of my all-time favorite "go-to" combinations... I usually find the best, and most unexpected, color combos when I am outside... Changing weather, like when a big storm is coming in, brings out the best color combinations!

When do you consider a completed project a success?

When the ENTIRE project team refers to the project with ownership... and affection. 😊 Actually, I consider a project a success when all of the tradespeople on the project are proud of what they were able to build... it means that not only have you designed something that they likely haven't seen before (and they are the ones who see everything!), but it also means that you delivered clear information that represented your design intent. I truly believe that this is what makes great design... and excellence in this profession. That finished photo is never a representation of just one person and their ideas... a great inspired photo is a result of ideas that were able to be translated to tradesmen and craftsmen who have the ability to execute. At the successful end of a project, I am often incredibly humbled with an overwhelming understanding that this vision I had was only possible because of the excellence of the team around me. I never forget that.



Share your biggest design secret.

Never. 😊 Just kidding...The best-kept secret is that there are very few “rules” in design other than scale and proportion. Track back to early days, and you will see that people were always mixing and matching styles based on where their travels took them... the grandest, most aspirational and beautifully appointed homes historically have told the story of the family and their travels through generations, showcasing pieces acquired and inherited over time with fabulous stories... they are the homes that, because of this, reflect many different periods and styles. My best advice is to pull out the antique secretary you got from your grandmother, or the set of wedding stemware that you might have thought odd when your great aunt gave them to you as a holiday gift, and celebrate their unique place among the treasures you are collecting... they will likely give added oomph to any space... AND if you don't have a great aunt or grandmother who were generous with their unique possessions, hunt down the nearest antiques or consignment shop for that little bit of history, and start your “story”!!

What is the most common design mistake you see?

Not trusting the gut! Authentically beautiful spaces have a genuine reflection of the people who reside in them... it is totally unavoidable!!! If you are tamping down the desire to hang a “weird” piece of art that you LOVE, but think it doesn't “go” or isn't “appropriate” (for example), that element of personality is not given the chance to shine through! I am ALWAYS telling people that I love the very thing that they have hidden behind the sofa in embarrassment! So, I guess... I would say, the biggest mistake in design is trying to capture someone else's vibe. 😊



How do you balance style, comfort, and functionality?

Is there a specific item you typically use as a starting point? (ex: rug, artwork, statement piece, furniture) I think that it depends on the project... and the client. Sometimes the client (and their personality) will inspire a piece that I have filed away in the recesses of my brain, and that will be a jumping-off point! Sometimes it is an antique or heirloom that the client doesn't want to part with that will drive an aesthetic... I honestly don't ever truly know where the inspiration comes from, it just comes!

What do you think about Sotheby's Home?

Sotheby's Home is an excellent marketplace to find pieces that might not otherwise be available for purchase through mass channels. It is a place where you can find that bespoke or “well-traveled” item that elevates a space from standard to exceptional and interesting!