

LUXPOP!



A modern rug by Gene Mayer picks up the circular motif of the artwork in an Aspen ski house.
Photo credit: Courtesy of John Ellis.



John Robshaw's fabric with mirrors was used for the bedspread in this tribal style infused bedroom in Palm Beach. Photo credit: Courtesy of Mark Roskams.



Inspired by the Bonnet House's shell room in Fort Lauderdale, the designer created a decorative wall motif with seashells.
Photo credit: Courtesy of Mark Roskams.

by Cathy Whitlock

Frank de Biasi: Of Style and Substance

Interior designers are, indeed, a rare breed. They can create magic and beauty in a space where none exists and, in addition to this sorcery, they are well-versed in everything from plumbing fixtures to the most recherché of 18th-century antiques as they balance time, budget constraints and their cadre of discerning clients.



The majority of designers are known for their signature style or hallmark, if you will, and a distinction based on the use of a predominant decorative look, identifying color palette or a particular choice of furnishings. And while this is more common than not, the designers who stand out in my mind are the ones whose designs are like snowflakes, as no two interiors are the same yet every design is exemplary. These are the revered ones whose installations elicit comments and the inevitable question, "Who designed that fabulous interior?"

Case in point: Manhattan designer Frank de Biasi who has been designing uniquely eye-catching interiors for the past several decades. Respecting the classic designs of the past without being formulaic, his timeless interiors have graced the pages of the top publications from the *World of Interiors* to the *Wall Street Journal* (and he recently landed a coveted spot on the new AD 100 List) and are ubiquitously among the consensus of those who appreciate heritage and respect for fine craftsmanship with an eye towards repurposing.



A pair of Rococo secretaries add a touch of Northern Italy to a master bedroom in Palm Beach. Photo courtesy of Mark Roskams.

The Richmond-born de Biasi's path to design took a circuitous route that included college at the University of Georgia and studies at the Sorbonne in Paris where he fell in love with all things French and the decorative arts. Perhaps best described as detours—a degree in international affairs and an internship with a bank—preceded his landing a job at Christie's in estates and appraisal. "I learned all about art and antiques and saw so many pieces, literally hundreds of things that I could see, touch and feel and received an education you don't get from books or online," he notes of his career-changing turning point. "I was also able to visit homes of important collectors and learned the what and why clients buy certain things."



Vertical cabinet panels and turquoise tiles are a few of the decorative accents in the Aspen kitchen. Photo credit: Courtesy of John Ellis.

Every great designer has a mentor and de Biasi counts Peter Marino as his. Hired on the spot by the internationally acclaimed architect, he details, "It was one of the most superb learning experiences. I used my knowledge of art and antiques and learned all about textiles and fabrics that I knew little about. I also learned the importance of programming, layout, form and usability." The experience translated into an important credo for the designer—the concept of "site appropriateness" and furniture placement. "I see a lot of architects designing perfect plans but we don't live in a plan; we live in elevation. Balance and proper height are important and I am a big believer in having lots of heights in a room."



Green and white stripes in the curtains, ceiling and rug accent a kitchen with Moroccan accents in Palm Beach. Photo credit: Courtesy of Mark Roskams.



Donald Bachelors painting of an ice cream cone adds a touch of whimsy in a Greenwich guesthouse. Photo credit: Courtesy of Stephen Johnson.

Known for his wide array of styles, the designer notes his true work 'caters to what the client is thinking.' Keeping a client's consideration in mind when formulating the design is naturally paramount as was the case of a ski house in Aspen. Drawing upon colors from the sky and the natural surrounding landscape, de Biasi took his cues from the client's incredible collection of art and the rest flowed organically. An Alex Ross painting in the living room led to a contemporary circular pattern rug by Gene Meyer while a gilded and bronze armoire proved to be a most unusual focal point for the entry hall. Based on a 17th-century original from the workshop of French cabinetmaker André-Charles Boulle, the piece from Studio Job's Robber Baron series boasts a "bullet hole" shot through the cabinet's center. The home also reflects the designer's love of everything old is new again, using reclaimed woods for the flooring and beams. You'll find no moose heads or Ralph Lauren plaids for this ski house, and the designs are an exhilarating departure.



A pair of "Sushi Chairs" flank an eclectic armoire with a circular bullet hole detail in the entryway of an Aspen vacation home. Photo by John Ellis.

Projects all over the world (that would be Manhattan, Palm Beach, Miami, Los Angeles, London and France) as well as domiciles in New York, Paris and Morocco create a small world and very busy life for the designer. As the old Southern saying goes, 'Grass does not grow under his feet.'



While residential jobs comprise the majority of de Biasi's portfolio, he would love to design hotels, boats and more historic homes favoring in-the-style of the late 19th century. His overseas work has amassed an impressive and enviable global resource of artisans and craftsman that his "clients greatly appreciate." Next up is a trip to India with a textile group with London's Victoria and Albert Museum that will no doubt influence future projects.

A bold splash of tomato red wakes up the dining room walls of a cottage in Miami. Photo credit: Courtesy of Mark Roskams.

Stay tuned...whatever the project, rest assured, it will be a one-of-a-kind.

FOLLOW US

