



KELLY
WEARSTLER
teaches
INTERIOR DESIGN

MASTERCLASS

MEET KELLY

Kelly Wearstler loves a story.

Whether she's reminiscing about her grandmother's collection of scarves or creating a room based off of a character whose world she has invented, storytelling is at the root of her design philosophy.

Kelly and her iconic residential, commercial, hospitality, and retail designs have been featured in publications the world over, from *Architectural Digest* and *Elle Decor* to *Vogue* and *Forbes*. She's spearheaded one-of-a-kind experiences and many private residences.

As celebrated as these spaces are, it is simply not enough for Kelly to stay in one lane. Her deep knowledge and appreciation of history, combined with a prolific creative

spirit, has led her into a design career that crosses mediums; she has created collections of furniture, art and objects, lighting, wall coverings, textiles, and rugs.

With five design books under her belt, Kelly has mastered how to find her creative voice and enjoy the journey. Now, it's your turn.

WELCOME TO KELLY WEARSTLER'S MASTERCLASS.



GLOSSARY OF DESIGN TERMS

Bouclé: A heavy textile containing nubby, looped yarn, often in two different shades, that creates texture.

Clerestory: A window or series of windows that are placed above eye level.

Dimmable: When a light bulb's brightness is adjustable.

Elevation: A two-dimensional drawing of a wall (or series of walls) with varying degrees of detail.

Enfilade: A series of rooms connected via doorways that align with one another (common in grand castles, like the Palace of Versailles, and museums).

Honing: The process of grinding a stone down to a smooth face and removing any natural shine, which creates a matte finish.

Hue: Hues exist within the color spectrum. A single hue is one shade within the spectrum.

Incandescent light: A type of light whose wire filament heats up until it glows. While incandescent lights have a high wattage, they are less energy efficient and last for less time than LED lights.

Jacquard: Named after a type of loom, jacquard textiles are woven, highly textured fabrics in which the design is incorporated into the weave rather than being stamped or printed on the material.

J-Box: The abbreviation for "junction box," wall-mounted units that house electrical wires. They're meeting points for different types of wires and can be placed in a stud above heavy light fixtures.

Kelvin: Units of measurement that relate to the color of a light source. The higher the Kelvin number, the closer it is to replicating bright sunlight.

LED light: LED lights have a lower wattage than other light sources, making them energy efficient and long-lasting. They tend to be whiter and thus less warm than incandescent lighting.

Motif: A theme that runs through a design and pattern. Motifs can be as simple as recurring shapes, like circles, or larger ideas, like "nautical," that are implemented through specific objects, texture, and color.

Niche: A recessed area within a wall or room.

Pigmentation: In design, pigment can be thought of as the source of color—it is the base of paints and other mediums. When liquids are added, pigments become diluted. As pigments age, their colorations can change over time.

Proportion: An understanding of the scale of specific elements on the same object.

Scale: An understanding of how the size of one object in a space relates to the size of the other objects in the space.

Trompe l'oeil: A technique used to trick the eye into thinking that something flat, like a wall, is actually three-dimensional. This is often achieved through photorealistic painting.



BEGIN EDUCATING YOUR EYE

You can educate your eye at any age, whether you're just entering design school or coming to interior design later in life. The most important thing for developing a keen design sensibility is being intimately aware of your surroundings: Pay attention to graphic design and clothing, architecture and landscape design. Everything has meaning and emotion. Bookstores, museums, art and furniture galleries, vintage markets, and clothing shops are great places to start developing strong ideas about what kinds of design—bold, muted, playful, classic, futuristic—you're naturally drawn to.

Keep in mind that your creative voice will continually evolve. Your experiences will shape it; the experiences of your clients will shape it. Your confidence as a designer will begin to flourish the sooner you start believing in yourself, loving what you do, and cultivating your passion. Knowledge is power. Educating your eye is power.

ASSIGNMENT

Go to a local library, bookstore, or used bookstore, and start looking at design books. Pick a random book off the shelf and begin your journey. Find five artists or designers you have never heard of, and observe their work closely. Why do you like it? Synthesize your thoughts. Write down one sentence about why you like their work.

SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

Design is everywhere around you—you just have to know where to look. Get lost. Look at the ground (and the sky). Find objects that elicit an emotional response from you and begin collecting them. Hold on to things—you never know when you might use them as inspiration down the line. Kelly draws inspiration from many different areas of design, including (but not limited to) fashion, architecture, graphic design, landscape design, art, and jewelry. She also draws inspiration from these fellow designers, who happen to be her heroes:

- JOSEF HOFFMANN
"He loves geometric motifs, and he loves black and white. His work was very confident," Kelly says.
- CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH
"What I love about him is that he committed to a story," Kelly says. "He designed this amazing home for a publishing family, and he spent three months with them to see how they live. His thoughts were that you should know how a family lives before you start designing. A story is so important when designing into something, and Mackintosh was really genius at that."
- PIERRE CARDIN
"He designed everything from fashion to jewelry to furniture, architecture, and planes," Kelly says. "He crossed over so many mediums. And he did it so well and with an incredible spirit. He was avant-garde and incredibly experimental, and he really stood out. He was unique. He followed his heart. You could see he had a passion for what he did."
- ETTORE SOTTsass
"He was the founder of the Memphis design group, and his use of color was free-spirited and so magical," Kelly says. "I always go back to his work for inspiration."

These men may not be your personal design heroes, but the takeaway here is that Kelly knows *why* they're important to her own creative journey. Find trailblazing designers whom you can look up to in the same way.

A FEW OF KELLY'S FAVORITE THINGS

Kelly looks for design inspiration everywhere. Here are some of the places she finds it.

PLACES TO TRAVEL

Spain

"I love the passion in Spain's culture. It is rooted in its traditions but modern in so many ways, from the culinary scene to experimentation in the design world. It is a beautiful coming together of art, colors, music, architecture, artisanal crafts, and an overall passion for life. It exudes a certain confidence that only comes with such reverence for the past and a strong feeling for the future. There is so much talent in the country! I've found incredible artists, antique dealers, and designers when I've visited."

Indonesia

"The natural beauty of Indonesia is so incredibly inspiring. The handcrafted arts and genuine hospitality of the indigenous people inspired me for a hotel project I am currently working on."

Paris

"Paris is one of my favorite places in the world for inspiration. The art, the fashion, the architecture, the food, the history—the French passion for life is always of the moment. I visit the city twice a year, and every time I fall in love with something new—or old!"

Japan

"Kyoto is rich with creativity and history. Everything is so thoughtfully considered and minimal. It's all about the experience. I loved exploring the culture and food as well as discovering artisans indigenous to Japan."

FLEA MARKETS + VINTAGE SHOPS/GALLERIES

Paul Bert Serpette (France)

"Paris has some of the best flea markets in the world. I always make a point of stopping at the Paul Bert Serpette. The offering is incredibly layered—full of anomalies and soulful finds. Every piece has a story." paulbert-serpette.com/en

The Original Round Top Antiques Fair (Texas)

"This fair in the small town of Round Top, Texas, is 17 miles of shopping paradise. The annual market features an eclectic mix of styles. The shopping is in different buildings, fields, and homes with dealers from all over the world. I found some amazing pieces for the Austin Proper Hotel at that fair." roundtoptexasantiques.com

Brimfield Antique Flea Market (Massachusetts)

"It's the oldest flea market in America. You can find everything you never thought you'd want here, from vintage bathtubs and unusual hardware to American furnishings from the '70s and '80s, European antiques, and architectural finds. Dealers come from all over the world, and much of the shopping takes place in barns. It's very charming." brimfieldantiquefleamarket.com



BOOKSTORES

Tsutaya Books (Tokyo)

"Tsutaya is one of the most fabulous bookstores in the world. It offers an unparalleled collection of international art and design books. When I was there, I loaded up on the latest insanely curated magazine and book selection. I loved the patina on a collection of vintage 1970s magazines that I brought back home." store.tsite.jp/daikanyama/english/

Owl Bureau (Los Angeles)

"My dear friend Richard curates the most incredible shrine of vintage art, fashion, architecture, and design books and magazines, many from his own private collection. A treasure trove of inspiration. I was there recently curating books for the Grotto at Santa Monica Proper." chandeliercreative.com

The Last Bookstore (Los Angeles)

This super-cool shop offers so much more than books. It's like a kind of art bookstore, with vintage and new titles and records. The way the books are installed is quite sculptural—it's amazing." lastbookstorela.com

Hennessey + Ingalls (Los Angeles)

"Hennessey + Ingalls is my favorite bookstore in downtown L.A.'s Arts District. The inspiration is endless, with such a diverse selection of books in art history, architecture, fashion, and interior design. You will find books from here in the Grotto at Santa Monica Proper." hennesseyingalls.com

Strand Bookstore (New York)

"One of my favorite things to do every time I'm in New York City is to go to Strand. I love to explore all their out-of-print and rare editions. There's a satisfaction you get from researching with books that you will never achieve online." strandbooks.com

DECOR WEBSITES

1st Dibs

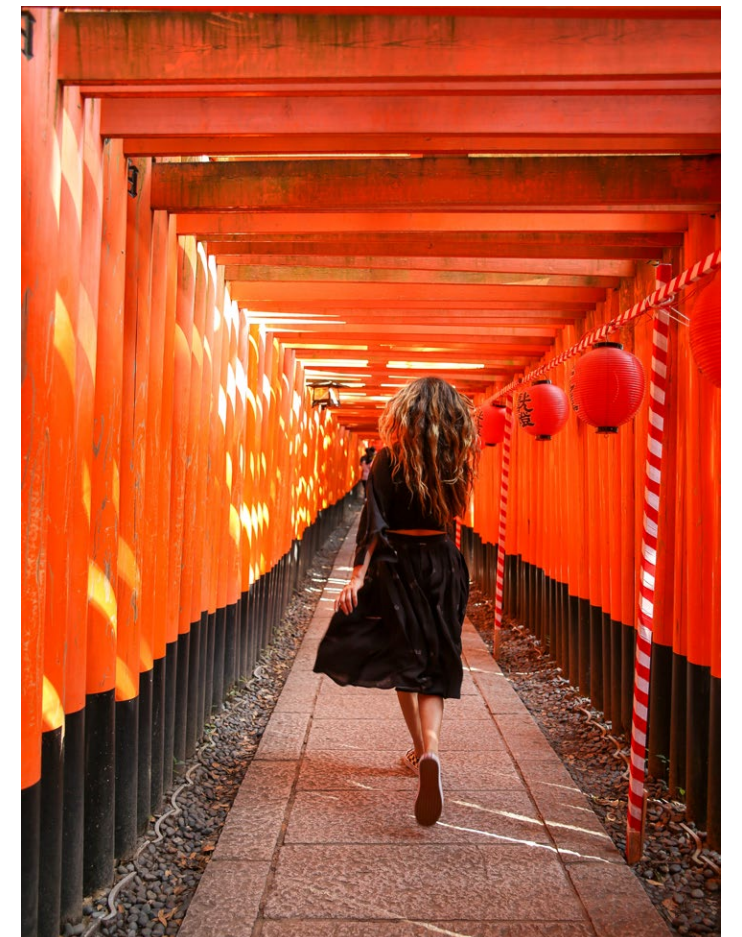
"1st Dibs pioneered the idea of a high-end decor marketplace online. Their selection is expertly curated, with some of the most uniquely beautiful pieces out there in every category. You can shop incredible stores and galleries all around the world from your computer." 1stdibs.com

Artsy

"They make prominent and emerging artists, lighting, furniture, and a range of designs accessible to everyone. They touch all mediums and allow you to discover amazing talents in the design and art worlds, both contemporary and vintage." artsy.net

Sight Unseen

There is so much inspiration to be found on Sight Unseen. The platform showcases an impressive collection of innovative artists and designers. They have a great eye for emerging designers and report on all the important local and international design fairs." sightunseen.com



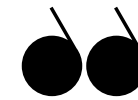
STARTING A PROJECT

One way to start implementing

Kelly's lessons is to begin designing a client's space. Your client can be you, a family member, or someone imaginary (a celebrity, a political figurehead). You can start by designing a single room, or you can take on something larger—a whole house, say—if you're already comfortable with smaller spaces.



KELLY USED TROMPE L'OEIL TO CREATE AN OPTICAL ILLUSION ON A WALL IN THIS NEW YORK TRIPLEX.



**IT'S NOT MY STORY I'M
TELLING. I'M TELLING
THE CLIENT'S STORY
THROUGH MY FILTER.**

KELLY WEARSTLER



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE: TELLING A DESIGN STORY

You always want to begin design projects by determining the project's story. The most important things to consider when starting the story are your client's needs and wants. How do you do that? By asking a lot of questions and then actively listening to the answers.

For this exercise, you may not have a client to interview, so go online and find images of an existing space that will serve as your design template (try looking for inspo on sites like Redfin, Zillow, and Compass). Once you have identified the kind of space you want to design and the personality of the client you're designing for, create a profile for your client by answering questions like:

- How might my client want to live in and experience this space? Do they cook? Do they love entertaining? Do they have a library? Kids? How do the kids want to live? Do they exercise and need a gym?
- What are the client's influences? What kind of music do they listen to? What kind of art do they like?
- What is the furnishing budget for the space?
- How might the client want to discover the space you're designing? Would they want to discover everything at one time? Or would it be nice for the space to unfold in sections so as to invite a sense of wandering?

Push as far as you can in terms of fleshing out this space and its inhabitants. As you continue to answer questions, the design story will start to unfold.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Kelly likes to photograph things on her phone and then experiment with different crops, lighting, and filters. While you're still in the process of discovering your voice, start taking photos of things that inspire you, and fiddle with them in the same way Kelly does. See how much you can transform the photo while still allowing it to fit into your personal aesthetic.
2. Revisit a place you love to go to (a hotel, a restaurant, a store), and spend time in the space. Take notes on the space as a whole as well as its details: Why do you love the space? Which details speak to you, and how do they exist to serve the larger world that has been created?
3. Capping your budget will force you to get creative and think outside the box. Go to local stores and flea markets in your area. (Pro tip: Get there early in the morning for the best selection.) Then design a room around items you see that inspire you. Ask each vendor questions about the pieces you love to deepen your understanding and appreciation of them. Take photos of each piece, and begin assembling the images on a mood board for future design inspiration.



UNDERSTANDING THE BONES

An early step in understanding

a design project is to break down the elements of the space: How is it laid out? How is the light coming in? Is it part of an open floor plan or is it self-contained? Knowing the bones of a space will help you bring a new perspective and sensibility to the project and will guide you toward better choices when designing.



**TAKE SOMETHING AND
GIVE IT A NEW SPIRIT.
BREAK SOME RULES
ALONG THE WAY.**

KELLY WEARSTLER



For example, if you're renovating a historical or architecturally interesting space, you might be able to reference the building's preexisting elements when bringing in new concepts. Kelly did this with the Downtown L.A. Proper Hotel: She decided to mimic archways found on the exterior of the hotel and bring them to the interior.

Part of your job as a designer is to engage with the architecture and think of ways to give it new life. That process requires you to consider the hierarchy within design. What are the most important features or elements in the room? How will you emphasize key features and then emphasize those with secondary features? If too many emphases are competing for attention within a space, you'll end up overdoing it. Like writers, designers must always revise, revise, revise until a space is well-balanced.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE: DEVELOPING YOUR EYE

Go back to your project space and begin exploring what makes it unique:

- *Is there a notable architect?*
- *When was it built?*
- *Observe the site's surroundings—how will that impact your design? (Look at Google Maps if you want to get a sense of the neighborhood and street.)*
- *Does the space have historic windows and doors that you can design into?*
- *What does each room contain? Is there great natural light? Views? An architectural feature?*
- *If there are strong architectural features, how will you work with them and establish hierarchy within the space?*

The answers to these questions will give direction as to where you should focus your energy.

Elevations are an integral part of Kelly's design process. At its most basic level, an elevation is a two-dimensional drawing of one wall of a room. They become more complex as details are added throughout the project, but you can begin with something as simple as a line drawing.

Depending on how detailed and accurate you would like your elevations to be, Kelly suggests using scale rulers and graph paper or computer programs like [AutoCAD](#) and [SketchUp](#), which offer free trials. (If you're unfamiliar with these programs, there are plenty of online and in-person classes as well as internet tutorials to get you going.)



ASSIGNMENT

Practice drawing a basic elevation. Begin by identifying one wall in your own home that you'd like to tackle.

First, measure the following:

- *The length of the wall*
- *The ceiling height*
- *The locations of windows and other architectural details*

Take it a step further by adding more details like window and door moldings, baseboards, crown molding, and wall lights. Hanging ceiling lights can also be included (recessed lighting does not appear in elevations). Finally, add furniture. Measure the lengths and heights of each piece and place them along the wall accordingly. This will show you how each piece of furniture relates to other pieces that exist within a space.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE: ELEVATIONS

Once you have the hang of drawing elevations, go back to the space that you chose for your clients in Chapter 2: Starting a Project and try your hand at creating three elevations of the same space. You won't have exact measurements, but make an educated guess using the knowledge you have gained from the previous exercise. As you progress through the elevation, take liberties in adding architectural detailing that brings your work to life.

For now, keep the furniture and lighting simple. You can draw in generalized shapes that will get fleshed out later on. When adding furniture, remember that many pieces' dimensions can be found online, or you can use your own furniture for reference.

MATERIALS AND ASSEMBLY

Kelly is known for *her bold use of beautiful materials, and she's always paying attention to what makes a material unique.*



VIBE TRAYS ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF KELLY'S DESIGN PROCESS.

When it comes to selecting materials for her projects, one of Kelly's most important processes is creating vibe trays, or physical manifestations of mood boards. When she's building a vibe tray for a particular room, Kelly will add materials, fabrics, and other objects that inspire her vision for the space. Every room gets a vibe tray, no matter how many rooms a project might have—and no vibe tray is set in stone. "I like to keep it loose because the projects are always evolving," Kelly says. Vibe trays provide a tangible representation of the space that's being created.

Remember that all materials are dynamic and play with and against one another in a space. In rooms that feed into each other, like the master bathroom and the bar that Kelly designed, make sure that the materials in both spaces are working synergistically. The materials don't have to be the same, but they should be in conversation with one another.

A FEW THINGS KELLY LOVES PUTTING IN HER VIBE TRAYS:

STONE

Every piece of stone is unique, and Kelly loves the “movement” that the medium offers: Sometimes it can be quiet, and sometimes it can be active with a lot of energy. What does each stone say? Is it more masculine or feminine? Is it too dull or too lively? Go to local stone yards to see the slabs in person. Mother Nature is the best designer.

METAL

In addition to bringing in contrast and color, metals can be wonderfully tactile. Some show the artisan’s hand in their hammered or brushed nature; others can be naturally patinated or matte. When she’s adding metals to her vibe trays, Kelly likes to think about the plumbing fixtures and cabinet handles as well as decor, like mirror frames. Don’t be afraid of mixing metals—doing so adds interest.

TILE

Like stone and metal, tile also comes in myriad finishes: Some variations are handmade and slightly irregular, giving them an organic sensibility, while others are more consistent. Tile can go on everything from shower walls to kitchen backsplashes to flooring and can easily bring pattern into a space.

WOOD

Look at a variation of stains and textures when deciding which types of woods to use. Do you want the grain to be visible? Do you want wood that is more ribbed? When selecting wood for a space, think about how it would look as a cabinet or a floor, and even how metals might interact with it.

MIRROR

If you’re looking to instantly make a space feel larger, a mirror is the perfect accessory (not to mention one of Kelly’s favorite tricks of the eye). Mirrors can be placed on ceilings, on moldings, on walls—the applications are infinite, which is exactly how a mirror makes a space feel. If large-scale mirror installation is not possible, you can also put mirrors in small spaces to achieve depth. Consider different mirror finishes and edge styles when composing your space.

PAINT + PLASTER

Paint is an affordable alternative to finishing a wall in tile or stone, and depending on how you utilize it, it can really make a statement. Paint manufacturers have their own sets of finishes (generally from matte to eggshell to satin to lacquer), and each finish can help tell your design story. High-gloss lacquered finishes tend to feel more dramatic, while matte shades can be more calming to the eye. When adding paint swatches to your vibe tray, make sure to look at the way the colors and finishes interact with the other materials you’ve selected—does high-gloss paint complement a high-gloss stone and give you the dramatic look you’re trying to achieve? Or does a lower-sheen paint paired with a honed or leathered stone achieve a more calm space?

Using plaster is a subtle method of bringing texture to a space, and Kelly loves its tactile quality. Plaster can delicately provide movement and color by allowing light to play off of its irregularities. It can also be applied in several different patterns (stippled, swirled, fanned, knifed).

MOLDINGS

Moldings offer an added layer of materiality, detail, and scale to a space. They can range in profile and heft, so be aware of how they feel. Are they large or delicate? How moldings work in proportion to the overall architecture is something to consider because they can make or break the space. Odd proportions can turn out to be very cool, but make sure to keep them in mind when designing.

LEARN MORE: MAKING SMALL SPACES FEEL LARGER

- **FURNITURE LEGS**
Consider designing with furniture pieces that have decorative, substantial, or eye-catching legs. Legs allow the eye to continue beyond the furniture’s body instead of coming to a halt at its base, which tends to happen with low-to-the ground pieces.
- **TABLETOPS**
Glass or mirrored tables can keep furniture from feeling too heavy in smaller spaces, though a beautiful piece of stone can be balanced out by more delicate legs.
- **BEDS**
When choosing a bed, go for one that has shorter legs or even sits on the ground to make the ceiling feel higher. Beds that are propped up on high legs can cut the room in half.



ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF A VIBE TRAY.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE: VIBE TRAYS

Assemble preliminary vibe trays for your project by visiting vendors and taking samples home. Bring home more samples than you think you need—whatever doesn’t get added to your tray this time can become the start of a materials library. Here are a few pointers for picking samples:

- *Take a field trip to a local stone yard to begin understanding different types of stone. Ask sales representatives questions about durability, application, and finishes. Look at examples of polished stones as well as honed and leathered finishes to understand tactility and how finish can transform a space.*
 - *Visit a tile showroom and touch everything. Take note of different variations in materials and see how a stand-alone tile looks versus how that tile looks in a group. How does a single tile versus a group of tiles change your perception of the material? Can the tiles be rearranged to create different patterns?*
 - *Find a cabinetry showroom or local cabinetmaker who can show you the ins and outs of different woods and finishes. For flooring, visit a flooring store to see samples in real life. Oftentimes vendors will loan you these samples for a period of time, so if the samples you grab need to be returned, make sure to take photos.*
- *Paint and plaster samples can be purchased at hardware or specialty paint stores. Always have fan decks of several different paint brands on hand for reference. Buy samples of paint in order to test swatches on larger areas. For small-scale sampling in your vibe trays, you can paint a few coats of paint on a piece of matte foam board.*
 - *Go to a local hardware store to find some commonly used moldings for your sample library. Think about scale: If you’re working with high ceilings, you may want more substantial moldings. You also want to think about profile: Are you drawn to ornate details in the moldings (which may better lend themselves to historically oriented projects) or less-detailed moldings (which will be less of a showpiece and may work for more contemporary spaces)?*

Once you’ve assembled a vibe tray, take inventory: How do your materials play off of one another? Are they in conversation or at odds? Keep in mind that materials will be swapped in and out, and that’s part of the design journey. You may really want a certain metal or stone or wood to work, but it just isn’t coming together for this project. Even so, keep that material in mind for something down the road. Don’t be afraid to mix materials in this process. Continue to edit your selections as you go and commit to a story.

MATERIALS IN SPACE

When she's deciding on stones or other materials to use in a space, Kelly places samples on the floor or holds them up against a wall and steps back to see if her perspective on the materials shifts. Try doing this in your own design space—it's how you will begin to understand scale in your material choices.

At the outset of her projects, Kelly often looks at her chosen materials in the context of a computer rendering, which allows her to swap things in and out easily. As you start to get the hang of programs like Photoshop, SketchUp, or Rhino, you might find that some materials aren't as successful as you'd thought they'd be. If that happens, always go back to your vibe tray and the materiality of the pieces you've chosen. Touch and feel them. Don't be fearful of something that seems like a risk, especially if the risk didn't work out (just because it didn't work in one scenario doesn't mean that it wouldn't work in another). Remember that design is always evolving and requires constant problem-solving.

COLOR IN SPACE

Kelly has been called the Queen of Color, so it's no wonder she feels strongly about what color can do to transform a room. In her opinion, color can add vibrancy, emotion, light, or love; it can highlight architecture; and it can even become a design feature in and of itself. When you're contemplating adding color to a space, always go back to your design story: What are you trying to convey in your design, and how can a particular color help you achieve that goal? When determining a palette for a client, ask them how they would like to feel. Are they looking for a space that's clean and pared down (whites)? Uplifting and happy (yellows)? Or sexy and sensual (reds)? It can be helpful to ask clients which colors they don't like in order to move forward quickly.

If your clients are stumped when it comes to which colors they like, look in their closet—what colors do they tend to dress themselves in? Clothing is one way to learn how people feel in and around certain colors, and the interior of a home should be no different. Take a few articles of clothing your client loves and drape those pieces over furniture to see how they feel in the room. If you're designing a public space, think about using universally flattering colors.

Always keep in mind how colors communicate with one other when moving from one room to the next. When all of the doors between rooms are open, what can you see? How does one space inspire or inform the room next to it? When colors coexist in harmony, they can create a sense of magic. Have fun, and take risks.



THIS BAR IN THE TIDES HOTEL IN MIAMI, FLORIDA USES A MONOCHROMATIC CORAL COLOR SCHEME.

ASSIGNMENT

For the span of a week, pay attention to the use of color in your day-to-day life. Jot down your observations in a notebook: Does the color of a particular accent wall change your perception of a space? Does a color have the power to feel warm and intimate or bright and monastic? How about both? In a space where color is used liberally, does the color in one room converse with the color in the next room? Are they tonal and creating a greater depth of field or are they in contention with each other? What are you responding to in spaces where color is successfully used?

Once you've chosen a color palette, the next step is choosing your paint. Paint comes in a number of finishes, but here are the most common:

- **FLAT/MATTE**
Flat paints provide the most coverage and the least amount of shine. They're less durable than other paints, so they're best used in spaces with a lower volume of foot traffic.
- **EGGSHELL**
Eggshell finishes are slightly more lustrous than flat paints. They still cover imperfections but are more durable.
- **SATIN**
Satin finishes appear velvety and are easier to clean than flat and eggshell paints. Though a satin finish can be appealing, remember that it's more apt to reveal brush/roller strokes, making touch-ups tricky down the line.
- **SEMI-GLOSS**
Semi-gloss finishes are extremely durable, meaning they're best used in rooms that get a lot of wear and tear (kitchens, bathrooms). They're also great for trim.
- **HIGH-GLOSS**
High-gloss paints are the most durable of the bunch. They're also the shiniest. Consider this family of paint for doors, trim, and cabinetry. Prep work is important when using this finish. It can show many imperfections when applied incorrectly.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE: PAINT

So you've picked a paint color. Great! Now you need to pick a finish. One way to "try before you buy" is to go to the paint store and get some samples. Test swatches of each finish in your space to get a feel for the final effect. Think about features that can be painted, like moldings, ceilings, and millwork. Do you want all of it to be monochromatic, or will there be different colors used for contrast in the story you are telling? How will color relate from one room to the next?

If you're not able to paint actual walls for this exercise, buy large pieces of foam core or poster board so you can create larger samples.

To create your own samples, use a paint roller or a brush. Brushes give you more control, though they're more time-consuming. Arrange the paints in a monochromatic array—it'll be easier to see competing colors when they're next to one another.

Paint one coat and allow it to dry fully before reapplying. The tint will absolutely change. If you're able to paint the walls in your space, test out the colors in a few different areas and see how light affects them over the course of the day. If you're using matte boards, move the swatches around the space to see how they feel. Start with smaller samples, then move on to larger samples once you've narrowed down your selections.

Paint is a big decision, so take your time and live with the colors for a bit before pulling the trigger on a particular hue. Be open to colors and combinations that you might not have thought of—you might be surprised (and delighted) by the results.

Once you've landed on a shade, go back to your renderings and fill in the paint you've decided on. Add swatches of the colors to your vibe tray as well.

Remember: Color doesn't have to be relegated to walls. It can be introduced through furniture, art, and rugs, too. If you've already selected some of those items ahead of time (or if you're transferring old furniture into a new space), think about how you might use the color of the walls to enhance the pieces you already have. There is no right or wrong order in this process.



**ENJOY THE JOURNEY.
IT GETS STRESSFUL
SOMETIMES, BUT
ENJOY THE PROCESS.**

KELLY WEARSTLER



PATTERN

Pattern crosses over many mediums. It can be seen in the veining of marble, the movement of different types of wood, in tile through the creation of geometry, in textiles—the list goes on. The power of pattern lies in its ability to add energy to a room. A patterned fabric can change the scale of a piece of furniture (or the scale of an entire room). How someone experiences the impact of pattern and its relation to other materials in the space is up to the designer—aka you.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. *Create your own line-drawn pattern either by hand or via a digital program like Photoshop. Is the pattern self-contained? Does it repeat? Does it bleed off the page?*
2. *What is the color story of your pattern? Is it monochromatic? Highly contrasted? Create six different colorways for your pattern. How do the colors and tones relate to one another? How does the feeling of the pattern change when different color combinations are used?*
3. *Play with the scale of your pattern. Blow it up on a copy machine, or change the size of the Photoshop file. Do some scales feel more successful than others?*
4. *What type of furniture, wallcovering, or rug will the pattern be applied to? Test out samples by printing them out and pinning them to a wall, then take a step back to see how perspective impacts your perception.*

There is no right or wrong answer when it comes to a pattern's color and scale, but keep the pattern's relation to other objects within the space in mind.

Over the next few pages, notice how one of Kelly's patterns works in four different colorways.

DISTRICT PATTERN: NAVY COLORWAY



DISTRICT PATTERN: TROPICAL COLORWAY



DISTRICT PATTERN: NEUTRAL COLORWAY



DISTRICT PATTERN: RUST COLORWAY



TEXTURE

Tactility is what drives Kelly toward her love of texture, which you can think of as the surface quality of any material. Texture adds an element of visual weight to design, and it's something that can appear in paints, textiles, plasters, marble, furniture, art, woods, moldings, and other surfaces. When working with texture in a space, remember to think about scale: Textures can clash when too many similar scales compete with one another in close proximity. Allow room for the texture to breathe in a space, and look at how the weight of certain textures plays off of architecture. In the Downtown L.A. Proper Hotel, Kelly uses a substantive textured combed plaster that holds its own against the cased opening it abuts.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE: TEXTURES

Head to a fabric store where you can look at and touch as many bolts of fabric as you can find. How does velvet compare to a bouclé or a jacquard? Bring fabric swatches home and add them to your vibe trays.

Visit a museum and look at all types of art. How do oil paintings, with heavy, visible brushstrokes and layered paint, compare with the texture of a photograph? When you're looking at ancient relics, what do those textures evoke? Keep these different material properties in mind when thinking about your project.



TEXTILES IN A VARIETY OF PATTERNS AND TEXTURES.

LIGHTING

In a bizarre twist of events, lighting is often overlooked when it comes to design—which is odd, considering that, done well, it is often responsible for creating the mood of an entire space. Light can highlight art, create a sense of greater ceiling height, and even deceptively alter the architecture of a room.

Natural light is the most beautiful, pure type of light and should be used as much as possible. You can pierce a space with natural light by adding features like skylights and clerestory windows. If natural light is too bright in certain areas, gauzy window treatments can be installed to naturally diffuse it while still allowing light to come through.

Beyond natural light, architectural lighting—or any light source that is attached to the architecture—can enhance your space. Not only is architectural lighting aesthetically pleasing, it's often a crucial wayfinding tool (meaning that people use it to literally find their way through spaces). It can also be used to highlight doorways or landscape details.

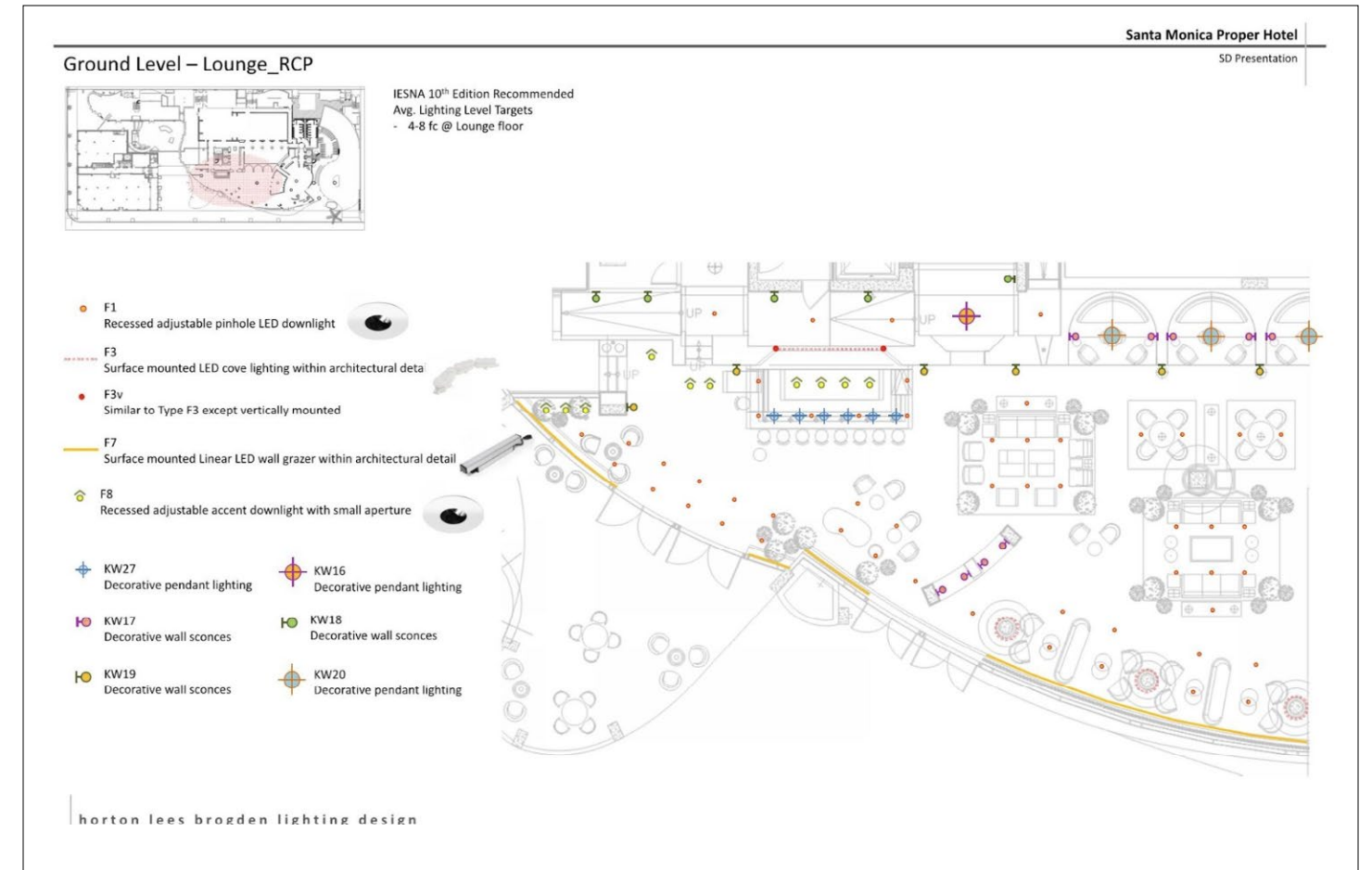
When considering lighting, remember that one purpose of light is to guide the eye around a room. This is achieved by placing lighting at low, medium, and high levels as well as bringing in step lights, table lamps, sconces, overhead lights, and art lights. Such variation creates visual interest and enhances the architecture of a space. Many light fixtures are veritable works of art and can be specifically selected to act as such.

When determining where overhead light will go, be careful to not oversaturate the space. Though some spaces beg for overhead lighting, there is not always sufficient electricity available (especially if you are designing a rental). There are two good ways to work around this. If there's an existing J-Box or fixture, even a fan, replace it with something that has more than one bulb, which will bring additional light to the space. If there are no existing ceiling lights, you can install a fixture with a beautiful swag cord (a decorative extension cord) and connect it to an outlet on the wall, which is one way to incorporate an additional design element into the space.

There's more to great lighting than the fixtures themselves. When you're conceptualizing a lighting scheme, keep the bulbs that you'd like to use in mind as well. Whenever possible, opt to install dimmers on your lighting, which allow you to adjust the brightness of a bulb depending on your needs (lower and moodier for a cocktail party; higher and brighter for reading). You can add dimmers to just about any light source: An electrician or handyman can swap out static wall switches for dimmers or can install dimmers on a fixture itself.

When choosing light bulbs, Kelly recommends going up to 100 watts if your fixtures/electrical wiring can handle it. As for whether you should go with incandescent bulbs or LED lighting, remember that each type of bulb has its own glow, which is further determined by the detailing on the bulb. Are the ones you like clear glass, etched, or frosted? Every detail will affect how the light shines.

LED strips are a great way to highlight different forms of architecture, like closets and kitchens. Though they have the reputation of giving off a cold bluish sort of glow, warmer options have become available in recent years. Kelly recommends using bulbs that are at 2700 Kelvins, which emit a more amber hue, but test a variety of bulbs and shades to determine what type of light you're gravitating toward.



A PLAN FOR THE LIGHTING SCHEME AT THE SANTA MONICA PROPER HOTEL.

THE LOBBY LOUNGE OF THE SANTA MONICA PROPER HOTEL.



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE: LIGHTING

Continue building out your space design by inserting different types of lighting into your elevations/renderings. Make notes on which types of bulbs you will be using. (Bonus points for designing your own fixture!) Think about using certain kinds of fixtures or bulbs in other areas around the space for continuity. Keep photos of your selections in your vibe trays.

FURNISHING

Now that you have the bones of the space solidified, you can move on to furnishing. When gathering furniture, Kelly always considers concepts like scale, materiality, proportion, and color. Furniture is a series of shapes that come together to tell a story that creates movement and vibrancy within a room.

Kelly looks at every piece of furniture as a sculpture, but sculptural isn't synonymous with uncomfortable. In fact, comfort is of utmost importance. Sit in furniture whenever possible to get a feel for it before buying it. Comfier pieces can always be balanced out by other items that are more artful—contradiction can sometimes create the best results.



PIECES FROM A FURNITURE COLLECTION THAT KELLY HAS DESIGNED.



A "SOUFFLE CHAIR" DESIGNED BY KELLY.

ASSIGNMENT

In beginning to understand the general sizes and heights of furniture and how different pieces relate to one another, measure items around your own home and write down their dimensions. This will help you start building your visual knowledge around sizing and scale.

Here are a few general dimension guidelines to keep in mind:

- *Coffee table height: 16" to 18"*
- *Sofa depth: 32" to 40"*
- *Distance from coffee table to sofa: 18"*

- *Dining chair seat height: 18"*
- *Dining table height: 30"*
- *Minimum space from dining chair to wall: 36"*

How do your own measurements compare with the above?

In determining the balance of a space, consider how your heavier or more anchoring pieces of furniture could be juxtaposed with lighter pieces. Symmetry can be created by choosing pieces with similar heft and scale, with smaller pieces being added for visual interest. Don't be afraid to break the rules. It's all about what feels good to you.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE: FURNITURE PART 1

Create a furniture plan for the space you are designing. Is there one seating area or several? How will corners of the space be treated? Do you need to add lighting to accommodate certain furniture features?

If you're stumped on what kind of furniture you want for the space, think about your location: What feeling are you trying to convey? Use materials that make sense for conveying those feelings. For example, at the Santa Monica Proper, Kelly uses natural, earthy, textured materials in order to bring a sense of casualness and relaxation to the space. She achieved this by working with a number of textures, including wood (which references surfboards), stone (a nod to seashells), a sculpture that references kites and sails, and a chair that looks a bit like abstract kelp (see opposite page, top).

Think about materiality. The two opposing coffee tables in Kelly's living room work because they are united in their materiality, even though their forms are quite different from each other (see opposite page, bottom). Their dark color is continued throughout the space in the black threading used in the sofa's fabric, which in turn relates to the black threading on the rug as well as in the side chairs. These are not necessarily obvious choices, but the room feels whole because of these throughlines. Having a throughline allows you to be more exploratory in your material choices.

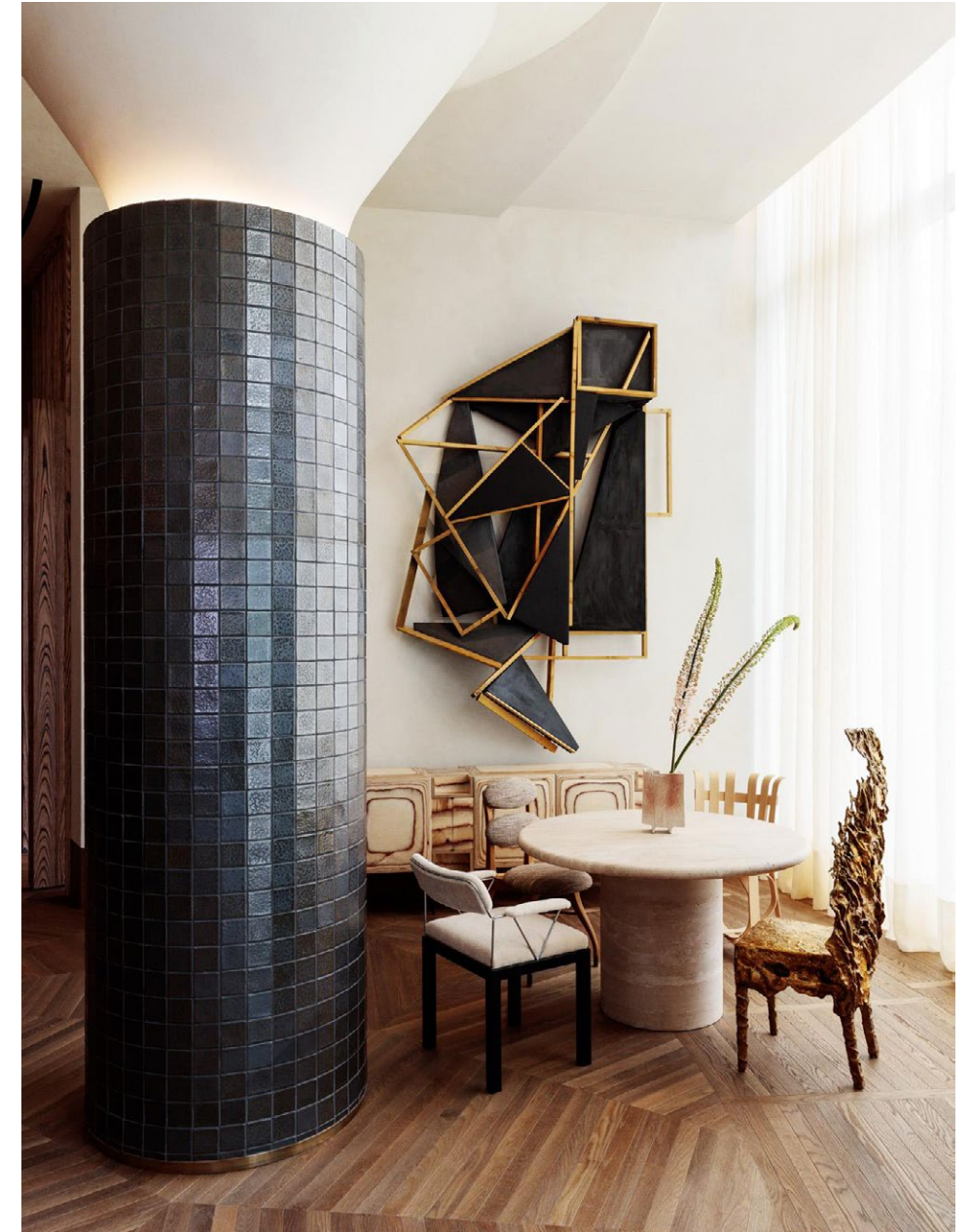
When designing a more monochromatic space like the Santa Monica Proper Hotel, make sure that all of the textures work together. Though the elements are different, they come together to create an exciting visual landscape because of the use of texture and monochrome. Each piece stands on its own but still works in harmony with the other pieces. Constantly return to your design story, and stay cohesive.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE: FURNITURE PART 2

Find pictures of pieces that you would like to put in your space. Either tear them out of books/magazines or print them out, then move them around, either on a tabletop or on a pinboard, to see what works where. Try to keep your options streamlined.

As you're swapping pieces in and out, think about how changing the color of a tabletop might affect the feel of the space, what adding bold print or color would do to the room, and how you'll maintain a feeling of cohesion within the space.

Once you have decided on your pieces, assemble them into your elevation, rendering, and vibe trays. Pay attention to scale and how the pieces relate to one another.





A GALLERY WALL IN THE RECEPTION AREA OF THE SAN FRANCISCO PROPER HOTEL.

ART AND OBJECTS

Art can be so many things: furniture, a light fixture, a chair, a painting. Use this definition to bring magic into your interior.

How art is experienced in a space is up to you. Will it be a focal point or something quieter? Small pieces of art can be just as powerful as large pieces, especially when you use lighting and placement to highlight them. A focal point doesn't have to be in the center of the room—it can demand attention through the way you light it and what you put next to it. Scale does not have to follow rules. You can put tiny art on a big wall or large art on a smaller wall; both make a statement that adds drama and interest.

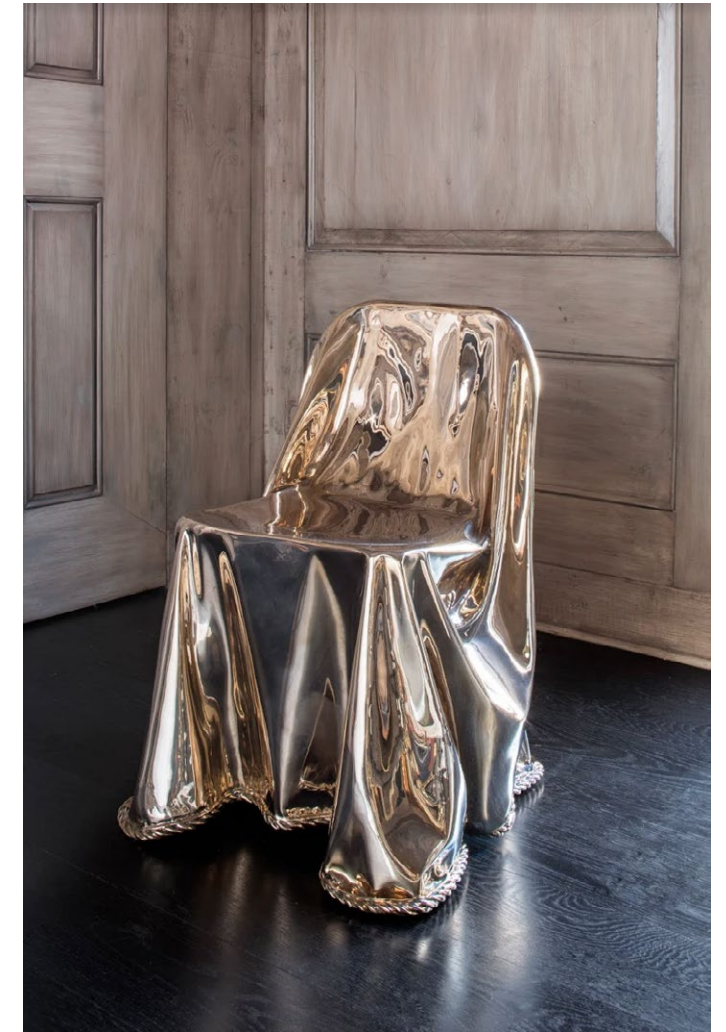
If you want to feature a gallery wall, research as much as you can to create a personal connection with your pieces, creating a story within the grouping. Mix forms and mediums like photographs, paintings, drawings, wall sculptures, and mirrors in different scales. Once you have your pieces gathered, start by placing one large piece and moving outward, keeping balance, symmetry, and spacing in mind. Think of it as a living collage, with each piece having its own voice and materiality.

When it comes to creating your own object and accessories library, just start collecting. If you're unsure about where to start, look at what you have a lot of—that might give you an idea of what you'd like to continue to collect. Follow that instinct and continue on that journey. If you want to start collecting something else, think about what moves you emotionally and let your curiosity guide you. Objects and collections have the power to remind you of a time and a place or bring you joy. Collecting is an adventure.

Kelly has always been drawn to gems and stones, and over the years she's amassed a collection that continually finds itself featured in her design work. Some offer color and texture inspiration, some have been applied to Kelly's Bauble Boxes, some become cabinet knobs. When working with your collections or those of your clients, think about how you want to display them: Are they hidden inside a cabinet, on full display in groupings, or placed individually throughout a space? Is the collection a focal point or lower on your design hierarchy?

ASSIGNMENTS

1. *Look around your home and assemble pieces that could go on a gallery wall. Be open to bringing in art and objects that can create tension and beauty. Vary the ages of pieces to add further interest. Do you have a vintage plate that would look beautiful mounted on a wall? A piece of framed tile? A sculptural piece of jewelry? Get creative. Draw an elevation of a wall and take it a step further by inserting your selections. Feel free to move them around before settling on a final configuration.*
2. *Once you have landed on something to collect, design a piece or an object, incorporating that item or material. Think about the whole story, be experimental, and challenge yourself. Is there a pattern of china that you are particularly drawn to? Can you make it into a textile? Can the linework in the china be abstracted onto a metal screen? Take one idea and then expand it into different pieces, like lighting and furniture.*



A CHAIR DRAPED IN GOLD METAL BECOMES A PIECE OF ART RATHER THAN A PIECE OF FURNITURE.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE: ART AND OBJECTS

Assemble a collection of art and objects that are to exist within the space you are designing. How do they relate to the architecture, color, materiality, and furniture within the space? What kind of scales will you be employing? Be intentional in your decisions. Once you've settled on a selection of art and objects, put them into your elevation, rendering, and vibe tray.

START YOUR CREATIVE JOURNEY

Interior design *can be extremely challenging, but put in your time, educate your eye, and beauty will follow. Delays will happen. Mistakes will happen. Then even more mistakes will happen. Roll with it and understand that it's all part of the process.*

Always remember to let your design stories guide your decisions. Go back to your story, to the images you've pulled together, to your client, to your vibe tray. And more than anything, always enjoy the journey.





CREDITS

NEW YORK MAGAZINE

AUDIO CLIP

Courtesy of Wendy Goodman and *The Cut*

ELLE DECOR JAPAN
MAGAZINE SPREAD

Elle Decor Japan October 2019 Photo by Kenshu Sannohe

MODERN GLAMOUR
BOOK COVER

Book cover from *Modern Glamour* by Kelly Wearstler, Jane Bogart. Copyright (c) 2004 by Kelly Wearstler. Used by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

DOMICILIUM DECORATUS
BOOK COVER

Book cover from *Domicilium Decoratus* by Kelly Wearstler. Copyright (c) 2006 by Kelly Wearstler. Used by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

PIERRE CARDIN
LEANING ON MANNEQUIN

© Archives Pierre Cardin

PIERRE CARDIN
FURNITURE DESIGN

© Archives Pierre Cardin