



States of the art

We talk to two leading designers, Elaine Williamson and Christopher Guy, about the trends and influences that are currently shaping interiors across the USA



Stylish bedroom furniture by Christopher Guy



A selection of interior and exterior design styles from Elaine Williamson

Having grown up in the south of America, Elaine Williamson of Elaine Williamson Designs (EWD) has always had an affinity for the grace and elegance of southern luxury. Everything from the textures and layering of patterns to the richness and depth of colour. With over 20 years' experience in residential and high-rise properties as well as commercial and retail projects located across the United States, she has a natural eye for design.

"Interior design preferences differ immensely from state-to-state as well as from city to city within the same state," explains Elaine. "In Dallas, for example, there are areas which still cling to pomp and circumstance interior styling while, in others, the clean, modern lines and natural 'green' materials and textures are very strong. In Austin, Texas, for example, because there are beautiful views, there is very little desire or need for window treatments. Here, an unobstructed view is best. If you live in the coastal regions, lighter and airier designs are highly sought after. At the end of the day, each client drives his/her/their own preferences and style sensibility no matter what the region."

When designing homes in the US, Elaine's company always considers lifestyle first. "It is very important to relate a client's interior to their living habits," she says. "For instance, if a family enjoys watching movies at home together, then we might add a sectional in that specific room. If they enjoy playing board games as a family, we might consider an oversized cocktail table with many drawers in which the various pieces might be stored. Does this family like to lie on the floor? If so, wood floors might not be an option. In this instance, carpet or a lush rug might be in order."

As for her most fantastic creation so far, Elaine says this has to be a contemporary home in Prosper, Texas. "It is a Frank Lloyd Wright inspired exterior with a white and blue interior. The homeowners have travelled extensively throughout Japan so, in addition to the clients' affinity for the colour blue, we incorporated a great number of Japanese artifacts and artwork. The result is truly stunning."

Elaine has noticed that neutral tones on the walls and natural fibres are gaining popularity in the US at present. Clean lines on furnishings are on point as well. "In simplifying their lives," she continues, "our clients are now open to also simplifying their interiors. Gone are the days of fringe hanging from lampshades, excess trimmings on pillows, etc. Simple,

clean, quality pieces that stand the test of time – that can adapt to re-design in the future – are the order of the day."

The current growth and expansion of Elaine's business is proving phenomenal. "We have been invited to brand our own home fragrance line that will debut this month," she enthuses, "with other EWD-branded home décor items planned to roll out in the months ahead. Our clients continue to inspire us each and every day to create the elegant and stylish interiors that serve as the backdrop to their lives."

Looking ahead to the future of interior design, Elaine thinks the US will continue the use of clean, simple lines, natural, eco-friendly fibres and materials, and always the brilliant use of colour as an accent. "While neutral, creamy tones are popular for walls," she explains, "brighter bursts of colour are desired for accents and accessories. For instance, a cream on cream room with highlights of lime green, purple or orange makes for a fabulous styling!"

Furnishing touches

Furniture and soft furnishings provide the finishing touch to a room and can 'make or break' the look and feel you are hoping to achieve. Born in Britain, raised in Spain and France, and now residing in Singapore, furniture designer Christopher Guy's international background helps him to view the world through a critically constructive eye. This he says allows him to draw on everything he admires to show that furnishings are about composition and symbolism.

An internationally recognised luxury brand, Christopher Guy can be found worldwide from Beverly Hills to Hong Kong, and Sydney to London. Guy furnishings have acquired international acclaim and graced the homes of Hollywood celebrities, suites of luxury hotels and resorts around the globe. They also lend an air of sophistication and glamour to numerous film sets and have 'starred' in motion pictures such as *Ocean's 13*, *Casino Royale*, *The Devil Wears Prada* and *The Hangover*, among many others.

"I like to think that Christopher Guy furniture is culturally transitional across a wide range of different markets as I take inspiration for my designs from all over the world," explains Christopher. "Here at Christopher Guy, we are renowned for oversized and dramatic designs which complement the American luxury market well. ▶"



Facing Page: Sophisticated dining, Christopher Guy-style **Above:** Whirlwind Mirror in Renaissance Gold From £1460.50



"Americans are currently seeking refuge from the pressures and stress of our economic environment and this is being reflected in the home. Our personal spaces have become more of a sanctuary and a space for relaxing; designed for personal enjoyment rather than lavish entertaining as seen in the 80s and 90s. My clients are opting for an eclectic decor by combining different furniture styles with the old complementing the new. This individual American interpretation mixes family heirlooms with contemporary statement furniture for true style."

Christopher says it is very difficult to categorise the different design styles of the US due to the widely varying cultures and settings. "For example," he says, "New York is all about contemporary, pared down urban living with a premium on space, compared to the sprawling colonial style mansions of New England,

understated neutral elegance of beach houses in North Carolina or the luxurious Hollywood-feel of LA."

The 'Whirlwind' mirror is the company's most popular and iconic design. This intricate piece has been hand carved from solid wood using age-old techniques to create a mirror of exquisite quality. Measuring up to 1.8m in diameter, the mirror creates a real statement.

"My designs now grace the finest residences and hotels all over the world," says Christopher. "However, it still amazes me when I walk into a hotel and see one of my pieces in the lobby or if I'm watching a big Hollywood blockbuster and one of my mirrors or statement chairs is starring!" ■

Contacts

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