



Mark Cutler

## A Simple Narrative by Mark Cutler

by Michelle Armstrong

Spanning the lengths of several continents, and over the course of a decade, Mark's portfolio unveils a collective narrative of the human experience; a story of love, of triumph, of challenge, and of hope. Interior design, according to the Australian-born designer, "elevates people, creating situations for a better outlook on life and opportunity."

Honored as one of 40 top designers named by the *Robb Report*, Mark Cutler's very intention is to craft a true reflection of his clients' lifestyle, rather than "another version of ourselves."

"For us, we are specific about the way people live. It's about creating a style for life, [which is] often overlooked," says Cutler. "[Interior design] is all of those things – those life experiences and memories that are being shared and created [in a home or space]. [And] for me the greatest compliment is when [a client] doesn't even look at the design [itself]. I'm creating a story of their lifestyle, which carries instant authenticity and interest."

Mark admits that while the design process is his passion, it's the expressions and reactions from his clients upon seeing their newly designed space for the first time that are the most rewarding. And with a tradition of locking them out the last two weeks of the project, clients are welcomed home with every detail in tune – set with candles, flowers, lit fireplaces and chilled Champaign; tears and laughter are optional, but almost always present. "It truly is life changing [in that moment]; a home or space has new meaning."

In reviewing Mark's vitae, the following three observations were made accordingly; and rather than simply telling you about his philosophy or how he defines good design, let me demonstrate. ➔



Modern farmhouse foyer blends European country.

All photography courtesy of Mark Cutler Design.





Contemporary fireside living.

## Observation No. 1

Live locally. Travel globally.

Mark loves to travel. "In being a foreigner," he remarks, "I find joy in tapping into the more indigenous venues [and local cultures] to better understand the lifestyle. Travel is such an enriching experience [in and of itself], but further deepens the process [for design]."

Finding inspiration, whether it is in Paris or London, or even a local flea market, creates depth and intimacy for a home. And according to Mark, being involved in the selection process allows "clients to understand the back story of an item, which carries over into the story of their home."

Even though Mark has traveled the world many a times, it is often the unexpected finds that make the lasting impression for a space. Take for example, a library ladder in a closet, a dining table macramé lighting fixture made with Christmas

lights, or an old mill wheel reused as a table in the foyer; what about an antique door from Spain employed as a headboard or framed pages of old books displayed as wall art.

With an eye for detail, he comments that travel "gets the client to enjoy the process even more so. From antique post cards and bowls from Africa to a [vintage] collection of globes, it's not about specific things, but [rather] how it works [within a particular space] and what it achieves." On a mission to "bring to life the simplicity of design," as he expresses it, every element of design holds an overall connection to the architecture.

In the end, being directly involved in the process [of design] further creates emotional attachment and intimacy, aside from the memory of the 'hunt' itself.

## Observation No. 2

Self discovery is worth 100 pictures

According to Mark, his design process is more collaborative in nature, than most; lending added accountability and transparency throughout, along with a more personal touch. Even further, having begun his career as an architect establishes a more team-based approach with the entire design team. Noting, "it's not always an easy process, but it's [definitely] an incredible way to make a living."

In knowing the challenge of simply identifying a style or design that fits your lifestyle and persona. Mark offers a simple solution: begin by "pulling pictures from magazines that you respond to, elements [or details] that are attractive to you," After you've collected about 100 or so, "place the pictures on the table and find the commonality, the thread that pulls them together."

Whether it be color, shapes, location or possible emotional connection, the collective photographs will reveal a common theme and style.

"You'll certainly find [out] a lot about yourself in the process," says Cutler. ➔

Hollywood renovation; the home was previously owned by silent film star Pola Negri.







Outdoor entertaining with a casual, coastal setting.



New American seaside estate with casual chic and European elegance.

## Observation No. 3

### Make peace, not drama

Making the process look effortless and simplistic is his focus. And in creating a style that is both timeless and fresh, "I'm creating a portrait of the people living there," notes Cutler. "It's their lifestyle. It looks at who they are, their values – all of those things, the life experiences and memories being created there."

The idea is personal. Whether it is a 20,000 square foot home, 10,000 or even less, intimacy captures the essence of space, without being overwhelming; but allows for entertaining. From Shady Canyon and Hidden Hills, to Santa Barbara and beyond, Mark maintains that personal is better; "It's the idea of making peace with who you are. The simple luxury [of course], is about living in true reflection and being authentic to who you are."

Mark concludes that in design, "being true to what comes alive," makes the process that much more intriguing and enjoyable. And in describing the end result with a client, "it's a journey for both of us." ❖

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