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5 DESIGNERS TO WATCH

THESE UP-AND-COMING TALENTS HAVE ALREADY ESTABLISHED SIGNATURE APPROACHES TO STYLE



RAFAEL DE CÁRDENAS

A lavender apartment for the model Jessica Stam; a lime-and-fuchsia family home for makeup star Jeanine Lobell and her husband, actor Anthony Edwards: This New York architect is creating colorful backdrops for a young, fashionable crowd. A former menswear designer for Calvin Klein, De Cárdenas left fashion to

earn a master's degree in architecture (his first venture out of school was working on the redesign of the World Trade Center site). His tactile approach—he starts each project by assembling fabric boards, as though designing clothing—is clearly rooted in his fashion background. architectureatlarge.com



NICKEY KEHOE

Funky interiors that mix burlap and velvet, French country with midcentury modern: L.A.-based decorator-shopkeepers Todd Nickey and Amy Kehoe have perfected a laid-back, artfully curated blend. Their style has struck a chord with a star-studded client list that includes Mark and Sunrise Ruffalo and Natalie Portman. Meanwhile, their store in Hollywood and their 1stdibs online shop are troves of affordable antique and vintage finds. Their own NK Collection of furniture is eye catching and well priced. nickeykehoe.com



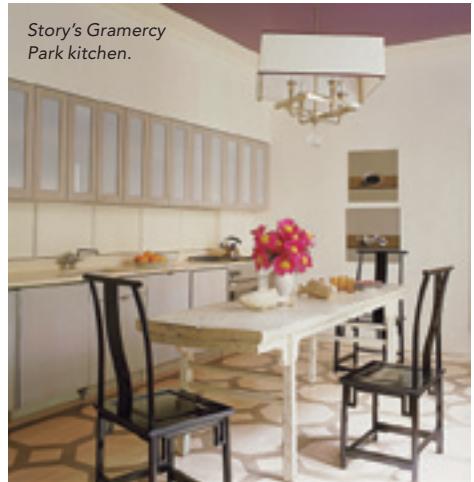
BETH MARTIN

This San Francisco decorator creates charmingly functional settings for modern life. In the D.C. townhouse of actress Alexandra Wentworth and her husband, George Stephanopoulos, she created the "Godiva room," a chocolate-brown living space that multitasks as a study and Nintendo Wii play area for the couple's children. In this designer's hands, slate-color velvet sofas mix handily with pink leather poufs, and a stark Lucian Freud sketch looks just right beside an old-fashioned settee. elizabethmartindesign.com



AURÉLIEN GALLET

In his refined interiors, 18th-century antiques meld seamlessly with chic '30s designs. Trained in France as an art appraiser, Gallet moved to New York eight years ago and worked for two of the city's top interior designers, Robert Couturier and Juan Pablo Molyneux. That blue-chip background led to instant commissions when he started his own firm last year, from a downtown loft to an oceanfront house in the Caribbean. Coming soon: a line of limited-edition furniture and lighting. aureliengallet.com



SARA STORY

As gifted with natural tones as she is with brighter hues, the native Texan—now based in New York—loves antiques, Asian lacquer, and cowhide chairs. Her soigné interiors, which owe a debt to the years she spent working with Victoria Hagan, deftly blend glamour with a sense of ease. This bold spirit (she competes on an international women's elephant-polo team) also has a wild side: Her study for the 2008 Kips Bay Decorator Show House incorporated a lion-skin rug—a family heirloom. sarastorydesign.com