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Party Perfect

Spacious rooms perfect for hosting a gathering coupled with luxurious indoor and outdoor amenities transform a Bel Air home into an entertainer's paradise

*Presented by
Dustin Cumming & Monty Beisel, Hilton & Hyland*
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GLAMOUR GIRL

Whether curating spaces, creating custom furnishings or staging homes, interior designer Christina Karras has the edge

WRITTEN BY JENN THORNTON

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RICK MENDOZA

How did you get your start?

I grew up in Northern California during the 70s, when sophisticated bohemian was all the rage. My parents were really into mid-century modern, but with a groovy flair. It was from them that I learned how a serious antique could mix with a flashy statement piece.

When I left home, I followed my dream of being a performance artist in Los Angeles and San Francisco. My world consisted of wild artists, musicians and the other avant-garde fringe-dwellers who would eventually become my first set of clients. And, since my Hollywood Hills home became the hangout for all the late-night parties, I naturally wanted to create a haven for my guests, one that really enhanced a cozy, sensual vibe, but with an edgy rock 'n' roll slant.

What influences you?

Fashion and movies, as I feel they are often so ahead of the curve—the amazing set design from a stylized film that transports me somewhere exotic; or a haute-couture runway show decadently staged in a French chateau; or hours spent in the pages of a vintage photography book looking through the lens of a renowned artist.

I grab inspiration from so many different places: celebrated eras, nature and its grandeur, street art, even my own earthy upbringing. With time periods, I enjoy the sensuality of the 1920s, the edginess of the music scene in the 60s and 70s, mid-century design. It's a constantly moving target, I guess.

What is your driving creative force today?

Right now it's more about color and texture. I admit I don't much like to follow "rules," as they seem to change all the time. Ultimately, I believe that a home needs to bond with the people living in it.

How does Southern California factor into your work?

I adore Old Hollywood glamour. There's definitely a kind of history you can only find here. Plus, how lucky am I that I get to work in the eternal sunshine of Southern California? Outdoor spaces, specifically, have become a big source of focus and inspiration for me. I also find great joy in a well-done poolside.

And you love texture.

Layers and textures are the key to my work. If I listed everything I planned to put into a room, it might seem like a cacophony of design, but when everything is in place, there's a harmony to it. Everything is finely curated, so nothing is random. I think that gives a space depth.

What are your other design signatures?

Lush fabrics, casual elegant flow between rooms, playful outdoor spaces, bohemian living. I am often drawn to a sensual, earthy palette, but also love couture and high-glamour. I guess you can say unpredictability might be a hallmark then. And, by that I mean, I don't design with a theme in mind or for everything to match.

The whole idea is to craft a vibe—something intangible, maybe something even you can't quite articulate, but that transforms the experience of everyone who enters the room.

Do you have a pet project?

My pet project is my showroom on La Brea. I have a new bad boy furniture collection coming out, plus a textile line full of velvets and linens. I will always hold the resort I did in Costa Rica very close to my heart. It was a crazy amount of work and travel, but I fell in love with the raw, wild jungle and slowed-down pace of life. I was honored to work with Bernard Judge, who was the architect for Marlon Brando's Tahitian island compound. I learned so much about flow and expanding on natural beauty; that is where I began to spread my wings. As creative director of the project, I was able to really color outside the lines from the ground up.

What's next?

I am currently working with a group of music producers and writers. I started with the company headquarters in West Hollywood and now am doing a lot of the homes of the musicians who work there. I just finished a speakeasy atelier [ShayQ] in Hollywood and got a taste of what it would be like to do a boutique or a hotel.

CHRISTINA KARRAS

456 South La Brea Avenue, Los Angeles 90036 | 323.939.9996 | ChristinaKarras.com



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ON THE BORDER OF SANTA MONICA AND VENICE, THIS BEACHSIDE BUNGALOW STAGED BY CHRISTINA KARRAS FEATURES A LUSH, BOHEMIAN-INSPIRED LOUNGE AREA; LUXURY BEDROOM WITH GLAMOROUS CHAMPAGNE VELVET HEADBOARD AND VINTAGE MOROCCAN RUG; EN SUITE MASTER BATHROOM WITH GREAT WINDOW; AND LIVING ROOM WITH LAYERED MOROCCAN RUGS AND BENJAMIN MOORE PAINT IN STORMY SKY.

