

Elina Katsioulas-Beall of DeWitt Designer Kitchens - Making the World Better One Kitchen at a Time

Elina Katsioulas-Beall is the head of DeWitt Designer Kitchens in Studio City. Elina is a native of Athens, Greece, and has lived in Los Angeles for over twenty years.



She is a multi-talented design professional with over 20 years of experience in design. Awarded a Master's Degree from Yale in Set Design, she launched a career in TV, film, theater and live shows, receiving numerous theatrical awards and three Emmy nominations. She was the Art Director for the Academy Awards three times, and she has worked with countless celebrities. Katsioulas-Beall won awards as a kitchen and bathroom professional. She recently won awards for two of her designs at the National Kitchen & Bath Association Design Contest, and an ad-

ditional two as a co-designer with DeWitt.

Elina Katsioulas-Beall is a certified kitchen designer and brings her classical Greek heritage and her set design experience to kitchen design. Elina received a Bachelor's Degree in Art and Painting from the Athens Polytechnic Institute. And in the same way she designs spaces for characters of theatrical plays and films.

What made you decide that you wanted to get into design?

I have been in art all my life. I was drawing since I was two years old. I picked up a pencil and never let it go down again. At that point, being a native of Greece, I was very inspired by the antiquities there. I had a parallel career as an art director in television and film and also did some stage shows and several variety shows. I was the art director for the Oscars on three different occasions, also Kennedy Center Honors, American Music Awards, and theme designs stemming from Saudi Arabian Royal weddings to stage shows for Richard Wirick.

How long have you been actually designing kitchens?

I have been working by my husband DeWitt's side for the past 19 years, along with my art direction ca-

reer, but I have been designing kitchens exclusively only for the past 5 years in this showroom.

I saw some of your kitchens on covers of some major design magazines. They are beautiful, diverse...and they look extremely functional. Can you tell me what sets you apart from other kitchen designers?



We are trying to address the client's personality. We go beyond custom. You're not only designing for their style (entertainment style, cooking style, and shopping style), but beyond that you're also designing their space. Our space is something that projects our mental space. And we have to get into our client's personality in order to understand exactly what they want, who they are, and design for who they are in the same way I have designed for characters in a film, for television or theater. So when you see a set, you know exactly that this set can be only part of the life of that char-

acter in the same way the kitchen that I design should reflect my client's individuality.

Along those same lines, if that kitchen reflects who they are, as well as being designed to endure time, it becomes a classic. A trend is something that is great today, but then it is gone tomorrow. The great challenge for designers today is to design something classic which means [creating something that is] enduringly beautiful. Twenty years from now it still speaks of its time, but doesn't look outdated.

Let me give you a scenario. My husband likes to cook, but we're both really busy people. I don't have time to cook; I live on the microwave. The only time we really use our kitchen is when we are entertaining, and I have very discerning taste. What would you say to me to make me want to hire you as my kitchen designer?

The very first thing that I would like you to do is pull some pages out of magazines that have something that speaks to you. It can be images, kitchens...something very inspirational. And that's an image that we both start with. Then, I will ask you everything about your lifestyle, both you and your husband, either jointly or separately, like what is your height; are you left or

right-handed; your habits around the kitchen; shopping style; entertainment style; cooking style; how many members in your family; what would you prefer to have; and what are your storage needs? You will start to see how many aspects there are in the kitchen, and how many things you have to look at once I design. I have to make the space absolutely functional for you. Form should follow function. It's the soul of an axiom. We have to break down your needs and address all of your wishes. At the end of my survey, we have your wish list.

If you tell me you have to see the stars in your kitchen, then I need to know that. I once had a request to have copperware in the kitchen so when the sun sets, it will reflect on the copperware. It can be anything you want. It can address all your emotional or practical needs. But that's how I would design a kitchen for you.

That's a whole other way of thinking. It's very different from an IKEA or Home Depot kitchen, because with them there's a template.

We don't do quickie-cutter kitchens. There is something to be said about mass-production that addresses all needs; but as an artist, I would like to go beyond that and transcend the ordinary. I really want

to tap into the extraordinary, and the only way I can do that is to connect with my client on a very intimate level in your mind and in your head so I know exactly what your wish is. And this is going to translate through my filter and become creatively your space. So when your friends and family come and see your kitchen for the first time, they will say, "You can only be in this kitchen. I cannot imagine you anywhere else!" And that is my biggest reward.

I don't realize what goes into certain things, and this is very insightful. Obviously, having worked in film and television, doing custom, themed designs, and just the extent of your artistic ability...that's obviously what makes you who you are as a designer today.



Absolutely! You have to take all those design forms and filter them through your creativity, and find the object that really makes you feel that you serve the community, mankind, or fellow human beings. I used to chuckle that I would love to make the world better one kitchen at a time.



Have you ever had a client that you just could not satisfy?

Yes. There are those clients. It starts with the individual. I believe an unhappy person will never be a happy client. I had a client once who asked, "Will my friends turn green with envy?" She was doing the kitchen for her friends, not herself. There are people you cannot satisfy no matter what, but the client is always right? At some point I'll find the one place where they will be happy?

Have there been any obstacles in doing kitchen

design?

I think for a true creator there should be no obstacles.

Highest High

When we photographed the last bunch of kitchens, I saw them come to light with very good photography. And I saw the beauty in the detail. They were on magazine covers. Eventually we won awards. We won 5 national awards in 2007 for excellence in kitchen and bath design. It was good to

have the work rewarded, and it was great to work with individuals who said we gave them a kitchen they didn't even know they wanted. And that felt good.

Lowest Low

When the client doesn't understand the type of work we do. They put us at the same level as the local custom cabinetmakers because they do not know what goes into designing a kitchen well. They think it's a bunch of cabinetry and appliances, you throw in a stove top, and it's done. It's not. It's an organic functional place.

Recently I introduced Gestalt design. It's a little bit like a melody, where it transcends the combination of materials. It's not just cabinetry, countertops, and appliances. It's an entire wholesome, organic thing. The sum total becomes its own entity. It aims to become the expression of the client's mental space, because the space of the kitchen that I will create will shape in turn the client. This is my design philosophy.

To learn more about DeWitt Designer Kitchens, visit their website at www.dewittdesignerkitchens.com.

Interviewed by Kaylene Peoples

To watch the video log onto www.agendamag.com.