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KU INTERIOR DESIGN

Michelle Ku, ASID



Ku Interior Design
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and recently launched her own company, Ku Interior Design. “I liked the space-planning aspect of the kitchen and bath designs,” Ku says, “but my real love is fabrics and furnishings, and I wanted a broader experience.” Now, she spends her days doing full-service residential design and even offers a flat-fee (per room) redesign service.

She begins new client interviews by delving into how the space in question is and isn’t working. “We also talk about their design likes and dislikes,” she says, “and I look at their existing space to get a feel for their style.” From there, she draws on her space-planning background and shops for finishes, especially her beloved textiles. “I come back with a few bags of fabric samples, which we narrow down to one or two,” she says. “Once that initial fabric selection has been made, I know the tone of the project, and I start to fill in the missing pieces and refine the design.”

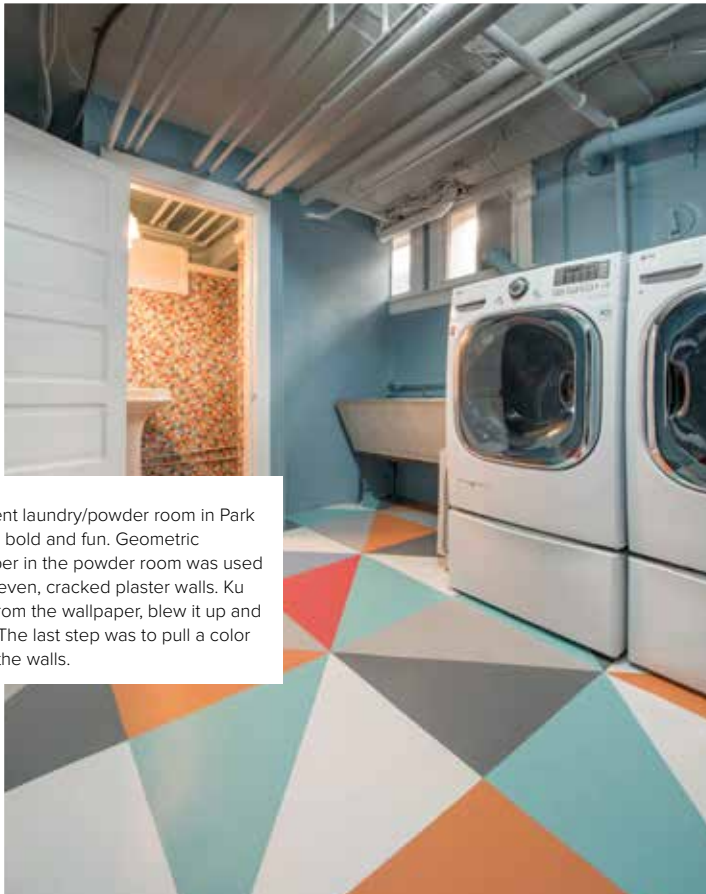
Ku says the analytical skills from her programming days serve her well as she meets the challenges of each project. “Being able to present a solution that is more than they imagined or hoped for is very rewarding,” she says. She especially likes foyers and powder and laundry rooms. “Those are fun,” she says, “because you can make a bold statement that is not really appropriate for a room where you spend a lot of time.” She adds, “I love creating spaces that my clients love to come home to. I really believe your home is a refuge from the stresses of the world.”

At age eight, Michelle Ku first laid eyes on *House Beautiful* magazine—and she was instantly hooked on interior design. In high school, she involved herself in selecting finishes throughout her parents’ new house, yet she majored in computer science and began her professional life in software development. Still, the design bug had bitten, and, 13 years later, she went back to school, “so that I could do what I have a passion for,” she says.

She started out working for a firm with a kitchen and bath focus,



▲ The main feature in this space is the redesigned fireplace wall. The wall was originally two separate elements, the fireplace and a very wide two-foot-deep wall niche to its left. Ku filled the niche with a custom built-in that incorporates open display and closed storage. The fireplace surround was widened, and the dimensional tile was continued to the ceiling. Crown molding and a hearth that spans both elements creates a cohesive whole.



► Ku took a basement laundry/powder room in Park Hill from dreary to bold and fun. Geometric patterned wallpaper in the powder room was used to camouflage uneven, cracked plaster walls. Ku took the pattern from the wallpaper, blew it up and painted the floor. The last step was to pull a color from the floor for the walls.



▲ In the bar area of this basement rec room/home theater, wall cabinets and an extremely high bar counter were removed, doors on the existing cabinets were replaced, the exterior of the peninsula was refaced, a new glass bar counter was added and a floor-to-ceiling glass tile backsplash that ties in with the colors in the rest of the room creates a dramatic focal point.

▼
 In this Mayfair living room, Ku removed the previous homeowner's DIY fireplace tile and added a custom built-in surround and new tile to create a focal wall. A window seat was built in the bay window, allowing space for a table where the family plays games. Lightweight but comfortable chairs are easily moved from the seating area to the table to provide flexibility in this small space. A pale blue ceiling is the crowning touch.



BAR, TERI FOTHERINGHAM
 PHOTOGRAPHY



COURTESY BLACK CROW STUDIOS



The Short Answers

WHAT IS YOUR GO-TO DESIGN BOOK?

“The Elements of Style: An Encyclopedia of Domestic Architectural Detail,” by Stephen Calloway, is a fantastic resource when I’m designing architectural details.

WHO MOST INFLUENCED YOU?

Many designers have influenced me, but a few of my favorites are Jamie Drake (of Drake/Anderson), Diamond Baratta Design (now Anthony Baratta, following the passing of William Diamond last year) and Bunny Williams.

WHAT HAVE YOU SPLURGED ON LATELY IN YOUR HOME?

We recently splurged on new windows. It is totally amazing the difference they make in controlling the heat build-up from Colorado’s intense sunlight.

FAVORITES:

Desk? Barbara Barry’s Lady’s Desk (barbarabarrycompany.com)—it is so elegant, light and feminine and I love the ivory finish and fluted front.

Light fixture? Arteriors has wonderful lighting, with a wide range of styles that work with any design aesthetic. It’s really hard to pick a favorite, but the Dallas chandelier is a standout (arteriorshome.com).

Paint color? Benjamin Moore’s Palladian Blue is a lovely soft blue-green with enough gray to make it work with almost any other color. After I started my own interior design business, it was the very first paint color I specified. It just makes you happy whenever you walk in the room.

Wallpaper? I love the custom watercolor designs from Black Crow Studios. They really make a statement.