



ALL THE BEST

BY RONDA RICE CARMAN

Passport to Stylish Living

Profile: Glenn Gissler

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I love the understated and elegant sensibility of interior designer Glenn Gissler. The Rhode Island School of Design graduate holds degrees in both Fine Arts and Architecture. Perhaps one of the reasons architectural detailing and quality craftsmanship rank high on his list of essential elements in any space he designs. Having worked on commercial and residential projects for interior designer Juan Montoya and acclaimed architect Rafael Vinoly following graduation, the New York based designer launched his own firm in 1987.

His approach to interior design borrows heavily from his interests in 20th century art, fashion and literature, while carefully uniting considered applications of furnishings, fabrics and lighting. But ultimately, he creates environments around his clients' personalities. Artfully blending traditional and contemporary furnishings that are comfortable, polished and visually striking without seeming "decorated" is where Glenn excels. Traits that have earned him accolades from editors and clients alike, including fashion designer Michael Kors.



How would you describe your personal style?

I know this is an entirely normal question for a designer, and given that I have a well developed design vocabulary it should be a straightforward question, but somehow it isn't. There are elements that recur in my work, but I see them more as elements in a dialogue with objects, forms, colors, textures, etc. The words that I am most comfortable using to describing my design style are: Liveable Warm – Thoughtful – Comfortable – Urbane -Sophisticated – Edited – Curated – Harmonized – Real – Calm- Contemplative. I am not a trendsetter. I prefer tried and true materials. And while I mix the very fine with the not so fine, quality matters.

What is your most prized possession?

Photographs of my ten year old daughter Siena



What inspires your creativity and designs?

I am an “idea sponge” always soaking up images and information for everything that crosses my path. People, images, objects, ideas, history, cultures...I am inspired by all. In this information age it can be overwhelming, but the at the same time it feels limitless and a way that can be freeing. On a less esoteric level, my clients and all of the talented people on my design team inspire and challenge me everyday.

Who are your style icons?

There are many, both living and dead, including fashion designers, interiors designers, lighting designers and graphic designers. Really too numerous to list, but a few include:

Joe D’Urso – for his incredible editing and placement of objects.

Albert Hadley – for his humility, great style and a generosity of spirit.

Axel Vervoordt – for consistently creating spaces where objects have real meaning.

Jed Johnson – for his earthy mix of historical styles and commitment to quality.



Who would you most like to collaborate with on a project?

My next great client. I consider my work to be a form of portraiture, but one that requires participation (and to some extent collaboration) from the ‘subject’ to make it the best possible project. Having collaborated with many subjects in the past, it is important for the collaborators to know their strengths, and to allow others to take the wheel when necessary. It’s how you bring the project to a successful completion. At its best this process can be invigorating and deeply satisfying for everyone.

What is your idea of earthly happiness?

Eating and drinking in the company of friends and family.



What books are currently on your bedside table?

I have to admit that my bedside table is a traffic jam and I always have a lot of books in a holding pattern waiting their turn. Currently:

Just Kids by Patti Smith – I am re-reading this incredible story of innocence, love and creativity downtown in New York City in the 1960's and 70' of Patti Smith and her friend Robert Mapplethorpe.

Ten Thousand Saints by Eleanor Henderson – a portrait of the modern age and the struggles that unite and divide generations.

On the Road by Jack Kerouac – a vision of freedom and hope that is uniquely American; a quest for meaning and true experience . And somewhat ironically it was published a week before I was born! Another topic for therapy?

The Age of Comfort: When Paris Discovered Casual and the Modern Home Began by Joan DeJean – a book of social and cultural history that tells the story of the invention of the sofa in 17th century France and the evolution of private space and modern comforts

Pioneers of Modern Design; From William Morris to Walter Gropius by Nikolaus Pevsner originally published in 1936 – a landmark work focusing on an area of design history that is particularly fascinating to me – the roots of Modernism .



What is your favorite luxury in life?

Without a doubt living with fine art. I have been looking at art in museums and galleries for decades. And as my resources allowed I started to purchase artwork of my own. Over time it has reached a critical mass, but that doesn't dissuade me, I continue to collect. I find it a remarkable pleasure and life affirming experience to live with the visions of others.

Past or present who has most influenced your direction in life?

My third grade teacher Josanna Berdzinski was truly inspiring. The world got bigger and bigger and more exciting under her guidance. I am still in contact with her to this day.

Ervin Nowicki one of my high school art teachers in Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin (a suburb of Milwaukee). It was remarkable good fortune to have a teacher with a Master of Fine Art from Yale. He studied with Joseph Albers and included Albers color theory when teaching his students. He opened up my world to modern and contemporary art. It was in his classroom that I first heard of RISD (Rhode Island School of Design) and where I ended up studying Architecture. It totally changed the direction of my life.

And then there is Michael Kors. Michael was my first 'real client'. In the summer of 1987 he was a young fashion designer and acquaintance. Michael asked me to design a 10,000 square foot project for him that included a showroom, the design studio, administrative offices, PR offices, sample production room, shipping and storage. I quit my job at Rafael Vinoly Architects and started Glenn Gissler Design. Never mind that it was just days before 'Black Monday' and there wasn't a large budget. I jumped into the fray and started my own design studio in New York City. Michael has remained a friend and a client. Subsequent to the showroom I designed two of his residences. He is a remarkable designer who has remained true to the approach he started 30 years ago. His clothes are flattering, wearable, transcend trends and are well made. His approach is highly edited and focused, descriptions that I hope can apply to my work as well.

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