

A photograph of three men in a modern office space. On the left, a man in a dark suit stands with his arms crossed. In the center, a man in a dark jacket and glasses sits on the floor, leaning against a white wall. On the right, a man in a dark jacket and light-colored pants stands with his hand on the shoulder of the man sitting. The background features a large window with a view of trees and a building. The window has red decorative elements and the text 'ENTER FOR ARCHITECTURE' visible. A quote is overlaid on the right side of the image.

“Absolutely anything from any resource is fair game in my office—I would rather spend the budget on art if I can find ways to save money in other areas without any great sacrifices.” Glenn Gissler

Glenn Gissler, Calvin Tsao, Zack McKown

From New York to San Francisco, Minneapolis to Austin, these 52 voices in American interiors are changing the way we live. Here's what inspires and informs a few of the best in contemporary design.

The Insiders

Glenn Gissler

ACCORDING TO GLENN GISSLER, art is the single most important element of a room. Art, he says—along with friends—is what gives a home life. His clients, many of whom are art collectors and dealers, might argue that without Gissler's classical-yet-modern environments, their lives wouldn't be so comfortable, or the paintings and sculpture around them quite as magical.

As a child, Gissler studied with a painter friend of his mother's, who was also an interior designer. With fine arts and architecture degrees from Rhode Island School of Design, he worked on projects with designer Juan Montoya and architect Rafael Viñoly, then launched his own firm in 1987. His many projects since then include residences in the New York area and Florida as well as showrooms for Michael Kors and offices for prominent CEOs.

Gissler calls his work the result of lifelong interests in twentieth-century art, literature, historic preservation and architectural history. His interiors are invariably diverse and polished, without looking "decorated"; his palette is calm, and earth tones are favorites. Especially important to him is the proper integration of beautifully crafted elements such as woodwork, lighting and antiques with a "sculptural presence"—art is never far from his thoughts. —*Lis King*

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Tsao & McKown

IN AN INTERIOR BY Calvin Tsao and Zack McKown, every surface is carefully composed, exquisitely rendered and nearly always custom. But for Tsao and McKown, surfaces remain, well, superficial. It is space—its proportion, its volume, its sequence—that is their primary concern, and it is this empirical approach to design that distinguishes their work. In decorating a room, for instance, they start not by searching through paint decks but by spending an entire day in the space—observing the movement and intensity of light, registering sounds, studying how the room is used and how it relates to adjacent spaces. They admire the *Maison de Verre* less for Pierre Chareau's clever interior fittings than for the surprises you encounter en route to its front door, passing through an inside-outside-inside sequence of spaces until at last you penetrate a glass wall that fuses the building and its forecourt.

"Design is not a commodity," says Tsao. "It's a means to create a life, to make life more fulfilled." With that in mind, Tsao and McKown immerse themselves in a client's life but with care. "Our job is not to be style Svengalis. We hope that they, and we, can be strong in vision without being stuck in it. It's all about give and take and a willingness to go for a ride." —*Heather Smith MacIsaac*

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