



woman of power

Sabina Vavra

Principal of Madison West Interiors

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The environment is growing more important every day, and Sabina Vavra of Madison West Interiors is one designer who understands this urgency. Having won the Platinum Award in Excellence in interior design by the American Society of Interior Design and *Orange County Home* magazine, and with a new, green studio in Laguna Beach, Vavra proves that style doesn't have to be sacrificed for the environment

944: How did you become interested in art and design at such a young age?

SABINA VAVRA: I have always been attracted to shapes, details — the idea that one's environment and surroundings immensely affects one's mental state. It was when I moved to Europe at 14 that I became ever more fascinated with architectural lines and details. It was shapes and interiors of all the beautiful buildings that made up the amazing cities that really encouraged my interest in design and architecture. It was a natural progression to start creating, sketching and designing, and having so much incredible history and creative ideas around me perpetuated my interest even further.

What does your ideal "wine and dine" space look like?

My ideal "wine and dine" space both looks and feels sophisticated and refined, yet inviting. It should create a beautiful experience for its guests complete with soft lighting, amazing textures and colors, and marked with stunning place settings and abundant fresh cut flowers. Stepping into the space I want people to feel invigorated and seductively intrigued by the atmosphere, design and company.

What details did you take into consideration when designing your new studio?

It was important to me to exercise green design when opening my Laguna Beach studio. While maintaining the integrity of the architecture of the building, I had custom stainless steel desks made from reclaimed steel, double-paned windows added to increase the amount of natural light, low-VOC paints throughout and incorporated natural materials such as jute and linen in the upholstery pieces. The finished studio has a wonderful eco-friendly industrial-chic vibe filled with a great breeze and lots of natural light perfect for designing in.

Can you describe LEED certification?

LEED certification was launched in 2001 in order



to encourage environmentally responsible, sustainable design and construction in the building industry. Standing for "Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design," LEED has created a platform for all new and existing buildings to be measured against in terms of its eco-friendliness or "greenness." Since it was established, LEED has been at the forefront of encouraging designers and builders to rethink traditional and environmentally unfriendly construction and design practices and instead create in a more responsible and sustainable manor.

Describe your feelings on being the youngest designer to win the Platinum Award in Excellence in living room design. [The now 29-year-old won at age 28.]

Winning the Platinum Award in Excellence in Interior Design last year was truly an amazing experience for me. Having the opportunity to be

recognized and awarded such a prestigious title by both my industry peers and ASID [American Society of Interior Designs] provided an incredible sense of achievement and [was a] tremendous honor.

What is your biggest source of inspiration?

The great thing about inspiration is it can be found just about anywhere, whether it's driving down the road or at your kitchen table. For me, however, I feel most inspired when I'm traveling. The compilation of a new place with all the different social influences, color compositions, architecture and amazing smells really seems to resonate within me, and I can't help but to feel alive and inspired.

How is your having a studio in Laguna Beach different than your old location in Aliso Viejo?

Laguna Beach in general has an amazing creative energy to it. It's such a quaint, refined

town with a relaxed beach feel filled with amazing people, galleries, cafés and the marvelous smell of the ocean. Creatively, culturally and aesthetically you really couldn't find a more amazing environment to design from. It's a place I always have been drawn to, and relocating my design studio from Aliso Viejo to Laguna Beach earlier this year was creatively the best change I could have made and a wonderful source of inspiration.

Describe your personal interior design style.

[It's] classically modern with infusions of the unexpected. I tend to shed stuffy overtures and instead create environments that show their sexy young skin hallmarked by clean lines, rich colors and bold textures. Ultimately I want a room to be the perfect juxtaposition of dynamic pieces and balanced tension.

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