

## LAST FALL, ON A BALMY

night in Los Angeles, I sat on a panel in Thomas Lavin's seductive showroom at the Pacific Design Center. The theme was bachelor-pad style. Not just any bachelor pads, mind you, but the kind of fantasy Bond lairs that are a specialty of a particular breed of West Coast designer, including my fellow panelists Kirk Nix, James Magni, Ron Woodson, and fashion designer David Meister. (The fact that my real-life partner, Marc Karimzadeh, moderated the discussion made the evening even more exceptional.) What is the essence of bachelor-pad style? The answers that night varied, but on a theme: "Sexy," said Nix. "A great bed," suggested Woodson (preferably covered in fur). "Exotic stone," said Magni, accompanied by photos of a house he designed for a young music mogul in Trousdale Estates with floor-to-ceiling marble panels. The group agreed on much, like touch screens to control everything, bars to rival the Sunset Tower's, chrome, leather, and lots of glass. Later, Nix showed a 58,000-square-foot home in Crystal Cove. In the garage housing the client's collection of 30 masterpiece cars, Ferraris and Bugattis are exhibited on turntables, complete with a seating area and a fully stocked bar. (We've seen something like it before in *ED*: See Ralph Lauren's stunning personal garage, December 2017.)

During the Q&A session, a designer who was inspired by the bold visions on display asked what he could do to get his clients to stop making so many safe and boring choices. "Just say no!" I said. I wasn't referring to Nancy Reagan's war on an entirely different kind of ugliness, though her own bold use of the color red in the White House inspired a new era of dining rooms throughout the nation. (See "Primary Colors," page 66.) Rather, what I was suggesting is that clients need to listen to their decorators more, and treat them not just as facilitators but as the true artists they are. You wouldn't go into Giorgio Armani or Chanel and try to argue with their choices, would you? But that's just what I find is happening in the decorating business at large.

Sure, many of the world's greatest interiors have come from that alchemy when artist and patron unite: What would an Elsie de Wolfe room be without the Duchess of Windsor? Or Monigiardino without the Agnellis? Or Pinto without the Al-Thanis?

"Of course we say no sometimes," the inimitable Alex Papachristidis told me on a frigid day back in New York. "But clients also say no to us. Your decorating is as good as your client allows it to be. You need that trust and rapport, and that chemistry between the two of you where there is a mutual understanding and interest in decorating."

And what if the decorator is the client, for his or her own living space, as we examine in this issue? Here we can see their aesthetics unfiltered, raw, unconstrained. Pure vision. Just take one look at the electric-green dining room of Georgia Tapert Howe's L.A. home ("Verde Vidi Vici," page 92)—who wouldn't want a dining room sheathed in that color? Or Neal Beckstedt's home in Manhattan ("A Good Vintage," page 116).



Or Relia Gleason's pitch-perfect retreat in fashionable San Miguel de Allende, Mexico ("Lingua Casa," page 122). Or, finally, a designer I have always loved and am fortunate to work with, Bunny Williams, whose personal studio on the Connecticut compound she shares with John Rosselli is all about self-expression. "One thing I'd never had was a creative space of my own," she tells *ED*'s Ingrid Abramovitch ("Personal Space," page 110). "I've always dreamed of having a studio where I could retreat to work without interruption—and without having to clean up after myself. If I am painting a picture or doing a collage or a decoupage, I can make a big mess and just walk away until I return the next day. At the moment, I'm working on my new book. It's about how style, quality, and great design are perennial."

As for Papachristidis, he had this to say: "It's what we do, so our spaces better be our best work. It's the essence of who we are. Decorating is a great luxury, and you should enjoy it—I decorate because it is my passion and pleasure. There is definitely a fearlessness I have in my own decorating, because I can be that way for myself. You have to take the fear factor out of decorating for your clients by educating them to understand what they really want." I'd listen to him.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Whitney". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Whitney Robinson, Editor in Chief

[elledecor@hearst.com](mailto:elledecor@hearst.com)

Follow me on Instagram: @whowhatwhit

