

OPEN HOUSE

ATLANTA

Design is about **compromise**—between clients and designers, between function and beauty. **Editorial Director Joanna Saltz** chats with six Atlanta designers to hear how they find a happy balance in all of it.

Joanna Saltz
@josaltz



WANT TO TALK?

E-MAIL ME AT EDITOR@HOUSEBEAUTIFUL.COM.

► **Joanna Saltz:** I'm curious: How is the design work in your own home different from your work for a client?

Michel Smith Boyd: I've just completely torn up my main bedroom, and it's exciting but scary. When I'm not working with clients, I almost have too many options.

Suzanne Kasler: I agree. I try to use it as a laboratory for creativity—it's kind of an exciting thing that you can push the envelope and design for yourself. A lot of times that does inspire the work we're doing for clients. But there's also a lot of pressure—good

pressure, though!

Erika Ward: I think it's also an opportunity to do something that you maybe wanted to do for a client but couldn't execute for whatever reason. Then if it works, you can do it a different way for a new client. But like Suzanne said, it's definitely a laboratory. And if it all explodes, at least it wasn't with someone else's budget!

Elizabeth Ingram: People ask me all the time, "What's your personal style?" And I say, "I don't really have one." I don't have a *thing* that I do. But I do have things that are recognizable me, and I think that



Mark Williams
@markwilliamsdesign and
Niki Papadopoulos
@nikipapadopoulos



"QUALITY IS SO IMPORTANT," SAYS NIKI PAPA-DOPOULOS, WHO ENCOURAGES CLIENTS TO OPT FOR WELL-MADE BASE PIECES, LIKE SOFAS—EVEN IF THEY COST A BIT MORE.

that shows up in my own living environments. I'm a collector.

Jo: So in working with clients, what is the best level of involvement?

Niki Papadopoulos: I am happy to have a client involved

as much or as little as they want to be. **If you want to e-mail me 37 Pinterest boards, that's fine.** I'm happy to look at them. Or if you're saying, "Do whatever you want to do, here's my checkbook, goodbye," that's fine too. As



ERIKA WARD IS ALL ABOUT INCORPORATING THINGS THE CLIENT WOULDN'T THINK OF, LIKE THE TEXTURAL ART HERE.



Erika Ward
@mrserikaward

SALTZ: ALLIE HOLLOWAY; HAIR & MAKEUP: NINA SORIANO; DESIGNERS: RYAN HAYSUP; HAIR & MAKEUP: STEPHEN MANCUSO; PAPA-DOPOULOS & WILLIAMS INTERIOR: EMILY FOLLOWILL; WARD INTERIOR: LAUREN RUBINSTEIN.



Suzanne Kasler
@suzannekasler

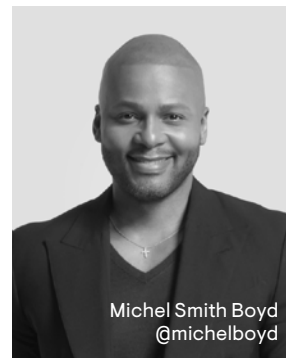
SUZANNE KASLER BRINGS TOUCHES OF THE HISTORIC TO HER INTERIORS WITH CLASSICAL DETAILS AND PLENTY OF ANTIQUES.

think it's important for them to realize—and this happens in commercial projects too—I'm not your personal shopper.

Jo: You do get to see so much that other professionals don't; how do you approach setting up boundaries with clients?

Mark Williams: Our job is to listen—to work with the client to understand who they are, what they like, how they want to feel at the end of the day. **We really do have to get into**

IN A ROOM BY MICHEL SMITH BOYD, RICH FABRICS AND BRIGHT SURFACES EVOKE A SERENE FEEL. "IT'S ABOUT THE MOOD," SAYS THE DESIGNER.



Michel Smith Boyd
@michelboyd



their heads and understand these things so that we can deliver the best possible environment. So you do need to establish some sense of closeness while maintaining a professional distance. As Niki said, trust is a big part of that.

Erika: The inverse is true too. In a lot of ways you are hiring these clients as much as

they're hiring you. The relationship has to be solid.

Jo: What do you think clients could be better educated about?

Elizabeth: Cost, definitely. You see something beautiful in a magazine, that isn't going to be cheap.

Niki: We do a lot of education with clients about quality.

Mark: I think there's a culture of immediacy that we're all living within that might suggest things can happen much more quickly than they actually can.

Suzanne: We try to do a budget and timeline up front, because if we can get that all out there, we can embrace the fun and make it enjoyable. Because design really does make a difference in people's lives.

Michel: It's not about, "I gotta have this one thing for the perfect room." Overall, we're responsible for the mood and not just the way the room looks. It's about how you feel when you're in it. Our job is a lot more than making things look pretty.



long as there is a level of trust that we know what we're doing and we're going to be working in your best interest.

Elizabeth: Absolutely. And I

Elizabeth Ingram
@elizabethingramstudio



ELIZABETH INGRAM DEvised A SULTRY SPACE THAT RIFFS ON A 1970S REC ROOM FOR THE BAR JOYFACE IN NEW YORK CITY.

