

Open House: Boston

Inspiration can strike anywhere, whether you're deep in the woods or in a Pinterest search. **Editorial Director Joanna Saltz** and five Boston designers discuss where it all begins—and sometimes ends.



Joanna Saltz
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Vani Sayeed
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Joanna Saltz: I want to begin with the question I get most often: When you're designing a space, where do you start?

Michelle Cortizo: Many things inspire me: nature, textiles, fashion, movies. But when I meet my client, I want *that* to be my first inspiration. I want to hear what they need, and then take that and expand it into how I can tell their story best.

Vani Sayeed: My inspiration is people. What makes them happy? What makes them get up in the morning and say, "I love my house!"?

Jo: It seems so rudimentary, but it's something no one thinks about. People wonder, "What's a hot color, what's a cool piece of furniture right now?" But happiness comes before all of that.

Cheryl Rosenberg: The first thing I do with a client is have them walk me through their house. **Maybe they're juggling five kids and running out the door with a baby seat, so how can I ease that stress with design?** We all work with people who live very busy lives. They're not hiring interior designers because they sit around all day eating bonbons.

Lisa Tharp: I have three muses. First is the architecture: What does it feel like now? What can be enhanced? The second is the setting: nature. What's

outside? What is the light quality that's energizing the house? And then, of course, the client: How do they want to feel?

Amanda Pratt: To Lisa's point, I spent a lot of years in Asia, and that's where I discovered this genre of design that's about integration—**it's integrating the outdoors with the indoors and creating living spaces that kind of bridge the two.** The first trip I ever took with my now-husband was to the Four Seasons Resort Sayan in Bali. You walk across this suspension bridge to a giant circular pool, and then down these stairs to a lobby. It's all open to the outdoors.

Jo: Let's go there right now.

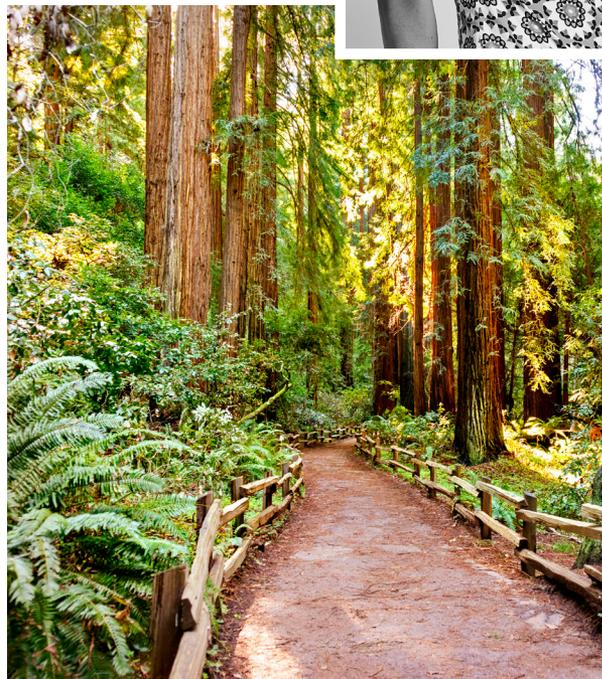
Below: Cheryl was so moved by California's Muir Woods that she channeled it into a green tile-and-mahogany bathroom.



Cheryl Rosenberg
@cherylroi



Above: Dedar's wallcovering inspired Vani's approach to this dining room.



PHOTOGRAPHERS: LITTLE OUTDOOR GIANTS (PORTRAITS); NAT REA (INTERIOR); GETTY IMAGES (MUIR WOODS); GROOMING: KATHLEEN SCHIFFMANN (PORTRAITS)

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Amanda: Please! I'm doing a project in Maine where we've completely opened the front of the house to the beach, using a very natural floor color, because it looks like sand. We're really trying to play with how that transition happens between the indoors and the outdoors.

Vani: Yes, I think one thing that's informed me to be a better designer is travel. When you travel, you experience new things and bring that back to your home.

Michelle: You reminded me of a kitchen I was working on. We wanted to incorporate this gate post the clients had found on an antiquing trip about four years ago. So we did the whole kitchen—barrel ceiling, beautiful cabinets—and the post now sits at the base of the island. It wound up as the hub and heart of their home.

Cheryl: I'm working on a master bathroom for a family that's relocating from San Francisco. I found this beautiful hand-crafted glass tile by Lunada Bay that I put in the shower, then used slate-colored tile everywhere else. It feels like the redwood trees of Muir Woods plus the rocky shoreline. The client walked into it last week and gasped, "This is it!"



The entire palette of this dining room by Lisa was inspired by the portrait of a lady looking into the distance. "We imagined she was the daughter of a seafaring captain," she laughs.

Lisa: Some clients of mine had a small portrait of a woman looking away, in all these rich, beautiful blues. It was such an evocative image that we made it the centerpiece of the dining room. **I had just started to watch Victoria, and I love the opening, where she's on the blue damask, so we did a traditional settee at the round table in a navy damask.**

Jo: Not for nothing, television inspires a lot. When *Mad Men* was hot, everyone was dying for midcentury things again.

Vani: I wanted to be sitting around smoking a cigarette.

Michelle: Drinking bourbon!



Lisa Tharp
@lisa_tharp

"Sometimes all that imagery becomes an influence I don't want. I have to slow myself down and have a more organic creative process."

—MICHELLE CORTIZO

Jo: Do you ever feel over-inspired? Is it ever too much?

Vani: Not for me! There's so much out there—you don't have to love or store it all, you just have to soak it in.

Lisa: Agree. If something is powerful enough to evoke a response, then you don't need to pin it on a board somewhere. It's never going to leave you.



Michelle Cortizo
@michellecortizointeriors

Amanda: I don't know.... If I spend five days in Milan and I don't document every single thing, it just becomes a blur, no matter how amazing it was.

Cheryl: Having access to so many digital images is overwhelming. A lot of it is crap!

Lisa: We do live in a saturated environment. Think of the explosive amount of imagery that we're exposed to every day. So I try and disconnect. I want to get to the heart and soul of what a room wants to become.



Amanda's travels—in particular, a stay at the Four Seasons in Bali (pictured)—led her to embrace indoor-outdoor design.

Amanda Pratt
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