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How Miami-based designer Eilyn Jimenez translates her travels into her interior design

The founder and creative director of Sire Design is all about the 3Ms: monochrome, minimalist and modern

Eilyn Jimenez dreamed of being a lawyer. “A judge would be more accurate,” quips the Miami-based interior designer, and founder and creative director of Sire Design. After graduating school at 16, the Costa Rica native immediately enrolled at Universidad Latina de Costa Rica for a bachelor's degree in business. “I thought it would come in handy for the future, but what happened in my second year changed my destiny. I befriended the son of the dean of the architecture programme and began learning about architecture. I fell in love with the subject and never looked back.” For Jimenez, architecture was a stepping stone to interior design. “I began creating design concepts for the interiors of my architecture projects. My professors always called me out for giving equal weightage to interiors, telling me that it wasn't necessary, but I have always felt passionately about interior design and believe it should be in constant harmony with architecture.”

After university, Jimenez moved to America, where she joined a developer and began working on private homes, offices, hotels and restaurants. At her next job, in a showroom in Miami, she assisted celebrity clients in furnishing their homes. The stints were great, but Jimenez aspired for more. “I wanted to focus on the intricacy of design and explore its nuances more deeply. That's when I made the decision to open Sire Design,” says the designer. The move paid off, and her ability to connect deeply and precisely with her clients' visions resulted in her clinching an array of coveted projects, from custom homes and high-rise condominiums to private estates, retail spaces and luxury yachts.

Admittedly for Jimenez, the growth and evolution of Sire Design has been beyond her wildest dreams. “I started out promoting my interior design services online for only \$99 for a two-hour consultation,” she recalls. “But word-of-mouth helped grow my client list. At 23 years old, I was selected over other top interior design firms for an E! Channel segment to redesign a home for Macklemore's mother-in-law.” Equally, the firm's ticket size has seen a steady increase since its

inception. While Sire Design's first project brought in roughly \$2,000, the firm now takes on projects with revenues up to \$1,000,000. "Travel has always had a huge influence on my designs. I'm now working to design my own home, which is heavily influenced by my honeymoon in South Africa."

Echoes of her travels reverberate through all her projects, but if one were to cite an example, the Terra Verde residence on Florida's Gulf Coast would top the order. The five-bedroom, five-bathroom waterfront property is a coastal-chic oasis that echoes its tranquil surroundings. The palette is dominated by monochromes that reveal subtle hints of blue, while textures and patterns nod to the shoreline beyond. "Pulling inspiration from Scandinavian design, the furniture and accessories were sourced from brands including Nordic Knots, McGee & Co., and Noir," says Jimenez, for whom the project served as a seventh-time collaboration with the homeowner (they had worked on several other properties before).

Of all the landmark projects in her professional repertoire, the most significant perhaps is the home remodel of former NFL quarterback Erik Rodriguez "EJ" Manuel Jr. Located just 30 minutes away from Fort Lauderdale's sunny beaches, the 4,500-square-foot property wears modern, masculine tones and textures that hold a mirror to its owner. "We layered materials like wood, marble, linen, leather, silk, metal and glass to offset some of the darker areas and maintain a balanced aesthetic," explains Jimenez. Beyond the home's muted front, is a smorgasbord of curiosities, including a floating wine cellar, a billiard room with a custom pool table, a beautiful fireplace, a theatre room, and a well-appointed office. Striking black floor-to-ceiling columns also cut a modish figure in the living room, offering privacy to the staircase and drawing attention to the room's height.

Despite her celebrity clientele, Jimenez is a self-proclaimed minimalist. "I admire Belgian architect Vincent Van Duysen's design approach and also love Nate Berkus and Jeremiah Brent's old-meets-new aesthetic. It's a principle I always try to integrate within my own designs," she shares. The South Beach Residence is a fitting example of Jimenez's style. The one-bedroom, two-bathroom vacation home, located in South Beach, Miami, received a full remodel with colourful accents juxtaposed against a clean shell. "The homeowners' funky and chic art collection matches their bright and fun personalities. This acted as a base for much of the design," says Jimenez. The space is laced with custom millwork, hidden doors and vibrant features that allow it to feel open and flow seamlessly while not compromising the square footage.

Of late, the designer has observed a raft of new trends in interior design. "For starters, bedrooms are not just for sleeping anymore. Seating and gathering areas have been highly requested from clients lately, and we have installed mini bedroom foyers in almost every new project this year." Jimenez has also seen an uptick in the demand for separate his-and-hers dressing rooms, as well as stainless steel countertops in the kitchen. "The material earns a patina over time which adds to its character. While countertops are great, we have taken it a step further and made an entirely stainless steel island in one of our latest projects." Amongst the other trends she has noticed are the revival of mid-century modern design and the domination of brown tones. "Browns are trending on runways and, as such, are trickling into our

homes. Rugs, side tables and wallpapers featuring brown base tones are a great way to add darker colours without making the space feel compact or cold."

Jimenez has had an enviable trajectory, but she has had more than her fair share of learnings too—some laughable, others not so much. "We once purchased a stunning 10-foot-long custom sofa for a client that took months to arrive. Of course, on delivery day, we realised we didn't measure the elevator, nor the entrance door. There were two options: either use a crane to lift it, or crank it up the elevator shaft. We opted to do the latter. The mistake ended up costing an additional \$5,000 but taught us to always make sure our furnishings fit easily through doorways, elevators and entrances. Our team laughs about it now, but we were all terrified in the moment!" Jimenez signs off.