

# WESTERN ART & Architecture

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## COLLABORATIVE CREATIVITY

Meredith Owen balances structure and skill with a deep understanding of what her clients want

WRITTEN BY Shari Morrison PHOTOGRAPHED BY Molly Culver Photography



Meredith Owen's dream of becoming an interior designer reads like a playwright scripted it. The scene opens with a 10-year-old girl and her family moving into an older home that needs some work. "I played with fabrics and wallpapers while my mom was updating the house," Owen recalls, conjuring the magical memory of discovering her calling. "That's when I saw how an entire space can be transformed by simply changing a few things here and there, and I knew I wanted to do something with interior design when I grew up."

Owen earned a degree in interior design from the University of Texas. Upon graduation, one of Austin's top designers hired her as an assistant designer. Her first job was a massive 10,000-square-foot house. "It was fabulous to gain experience on a project like that at such a young age," she says. She worked with the designer for 10 years honing her skills and, in the process, gaining a following of repeat clients. Then, as if the script took a turn toward delightful romantic comedy, Owen met and married an architect. "He jokes that we met designing a bar, not while we were in a bar," she says.



**Opposite page:** Blue skies over a mountain retreat accent the blending of contemporary design with natural materials, offering a peaceful escape and stunning mountain views. **This page, clockwise from bottom left:** Gloucester chairs and Blow side tables create an inviting porch. | The great room features a two-tiered Launceston Grande chandelier in bronze by Chapman & Myers, from Visual Comfort. Jamestown swivel chairs from Wesley Hall and an Arden Ottoman from Cisco Home add a comfy feel to the old-world feeling created with stone and wood. | Brizo plumbing fixtures and backsplash of Ann Sacks Savoy Classic Field Tiles (4 x 8 inches) in bronze add pizzazz to a kitchen. | Adjoining a cozy sofa, a Scala hand-forged aged-iron table lamp by Signature Collection, from Visual Comfort, stands atop an Avino side table from Hickory Chair.



She started Meredith Owen Interiors nine years ago and says she's blessed with clients, projects, and employees. Today, the firm is launching a new project with a client who has been with her from day one. "They were one of my first clients," Owen says. "Now, we are getting ready to start another project for them, which I feel is a testament to our team."

In fact, many of her clients have become personal friends. "That's because over a two- or three-year build, you are working with them day in and day out," she says. "If I weren't a designer, I could be a therapist, because I love people and always want to know how they think and live and work. We have many different types of clients, from young couples with small kids to bachelors to high-powered travelers. The best way to know their style is to get to know them personally, so we can tailor their design to them distinctly. People often say that I have different design styles. That's true, because we design for the person and for their family in their spaces."

From custom builds to life-changing remodels, Owen and her team have a clear process for designing homes: It's all about balancing structure and skill with personalization. They begin by getting to know the client and their lifestyle, how they use their home, and what feels authentic to them. "From there, we guide clients through each step of the design process: developing a vision, creating floor plans, sourcing finishes and furnishings, and even managing installation. It's a clear, organized path



**This page, from top:** Owen designed this Hill Country retreat with serene earthy colors to balance modern luxury with its natural surroundings and open spaces. | A Leone Stocked sofa from Vanguard Furniture pairs nicely with a Tricia swivel chair from Hooker Furniture to create a welcoming conversation space. Brownstone's Messina coffee table in Beach finish complements the room. | For this modern kitchen, Owen selected countertops and backsplash fashioned out of StratusQuartz slabs from Stratus Surfaces and chose Visual Comfort's Wellfleet medium-wide pendants to illuminate the space. **Opposite page:** This primary bedroom features a Chrysler side table in steel with aged brass from Noir Furniture, a Palmer Canopy Beach Bed from Brownstone Furniture, and a Cera Rug from Jaipur Living.

that ensures nothing is overlooked, while leaving room to tailor the experience so the results feel uniquely theirs."

Of her collaborative process, Owen says, "We cater to clients' needs by keeping them at the forefront, so that each experience is personal and curated. From design concept to placing the last accessory, we want them to feel like they are being cared for and heard." Collaboration is also a key factor for Meredith Owen Interiors' team members. Senior Designer and Project Manager Lisha Tuma has worked with Owen for 13 years. "She's my wonder woman," Owen says. "I swear she can read my mind. My team is constantly sharing and fine-tuning ideas and asking, 'How can we make the next project better?'"

As a testament to Owen and her team's hard work, one of their Colorado projects appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* in 2023; and at the 2024 Design Excellence Awards for an Austin-based ASID chapter, they were awarded first place for residential homes over 5,000 square feet and second place for residences under 5,000 square feet. They have received many awards from the Houzz community and from the prestigious ASID organization, which gave



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them first place in four categories in 2022.

“I don’t want a project to be trendy,” Owen says of her team’s forward-thinking design concepts. “I love incorporating new design ideas. If we’re remodeling your kitchen, maybe we’ll retile your hood instead of using standard cabinetry.” Thinking outside the box is something she and her team do, keeping in mind that what’s most important is that the design is executed well.

One idea that distinguishes the firm is its use of unique or interesting light fixtures. In a 6,000-square-foot Port Aransas beach house overlooking Texas’ Gulf Coast, they hung a chandelier to cascade from the top of the home down its three stories. Glass walls on three sides offer views of the water and allow light to play with the chandelier, creating some dreamy spaces and other lively spaces.

Owen says it’s fun to fulfill special requests for clients. One was to install a “Push for Champagne” button in the kitchen that chimes when pressed as a reminder that it’s time to pop some bubbly. Another was a pass-through



**This page, from top:** Expand a cozy space like this by painting cabinetry in Sherwin Williams Foggy Day. Ann Sacks MADE Modern Valley Field Tile (8 x 8 inch) is accented by Visual Comfort’s Rousseau small bath sconces. | For this Nashville home’s primary bedroom, Owen selected a leather headboard from Copenhagen Imports, Parker nightstands from Made Goods, and a statement rug from Black Sheep. **Opposite page:** Interior Designer Meredith Owen poses in a great room she designed that features custom black stained cabinets with accessories from Made Goods as well as a Fitz lounge chair and ottoman from Troscan Design.

window onto an adjoining patio, allowing partiers to enjoy their libations outdoors amidst beautiful scenery.

While fun and enjoyment play a role in her success, the very heart of her work is her love for timeless design. She says clients are feeling braver than they were when she first started in the business, daring to try something they never imagined they would consider. But though clients are more open-minded and bolder these days, Owen still directs them toward products, finishes, and furnishings that are timeless. She might suggest they invest in a handmade, hand-knotted woven rug, a piece that can be modern or contemporary in pattern. Or, she says, “I might push a client to invest in an eight-way, hand-tied sofa instead of buying something off the floor at a retailer. They’ll be rewarded, as it will last them so much longer.” And she adds, “Sometimes it’s not about style. Materials like marble, that have been used for centuries, are examples of timeless investments. When you see marble pieces in Europe that have been there for hundreds of years and see their beauty — how letting things live and age, and



how a patina will form, even on hardware — a lot of that creates a timeless elegance that’s wonderful to live with.”

And so, Meredith Owen Interiors’ story continues to follow its idyllic script. Today, as she has for almost a decade, she still happily creates peaceful escapes and multi-generational homes, ritzy bachelor pads, and artsy, charming homes — as well as distinctive mountain and beach getaways — for clients who each have their own vision of living in relaxed luxury. ■

**Shari Morrison** has been in the business of art for more than 40 years. She helped found the Scottsdale Artists’ School and the American Women Artists, and directed the Santa Fe Artists’ Medical Fund for some years.

**Molly Culver** is an interior photographer based in Texas, working primarily with designers, publications, and brands.

## Q&A with Meredith Owen, founder of Meredith Owen Interiors in West Lake Hills, Texas

**Q:** A client is in the planning stages of a kitchen remodel and wants either quartz or quartzite countertops. Can you offer a preference for one or the other?

**A:** Both products are durable, quartzite being a natural stone while quartz is an engineered stone made from quartz crystals, resin, and pigments. Quartzite has several advantages in that it has a higher heat resistance, and its aesthetic is more natural. Depending on your needs for a kitchen island, large slabs of quartzite are available for today’s oversized islands, so the installation can be seamless. Quartz has a good attribute in that it is non-porous and easy to maintain.

**Q:** One thing that never seems to change are kitchen hoods. If someone is seeking an updated style for their kitchen, do you have suggestions on how to create a more modern look for a hood?

**A:** Plaster was everywhere in 2006 and 2007, and now it’s back. A plaster hood gives a kitchen a more dynamic look. One can also wrap the hood with countertop material to create a seamless look, especially if the countertop material has been installed all the way up the backsplash.

**Q:** Are there any must haves for improvement in kitchen appliances?

**A:** Some of the greatest things I incorporate into every kitchen are touch faucets. You can set one to a preferred warmth; then when you touch it, it automatically dispenses at that temperature. Brizo, the top end of the Delta brand, makes a nice one. Also, any time I can talk a client into it, the best new kitchen appliance I love is a steam oven. Instead of pulling nutrients out of food, as a microwave does, it injects moisture into it, preserving not only the flavor but also the nutrients. If you want to reheat a piece of salmon, potatoes and broccoli, you can do it all together at one time at the same temperature and it tastes as if it was freshly cooked. Both Wolf and Thermador have received great feedback on their steam ovens.

**Q:** What role do window coverings play in a home?

**A:** There are several considerations for window coverings that could include black-out draperies, sheers, Roman shades, and outdoor roller shades. If a bedroom has direct sun, be it eastern or western sun, it can call for a heavy-duty window treatment to block the heat and light. Some things to consider in determining the need for window coverings are: Is there a porch or an overhang that provides some relief? Sheers might be an answer in this situation. Are there floors or art or furnishings that might suffer if direct sunlight hits them on a regular basis? A heavier drapery to shield valuables is called for. Does a space call for window coverings for privacy? Accent fabrics can be used in Roman shades or draperies when heavy coverings are not called for. Outside roller shades become important when a room needs a window covering but it is too large to accommodate draperies. As well, outdoor roller shades provide a security measure.