KC
CITY'S BEST
2011

240,896 VOTES
87 RESTAURANTS
33 BOUTIQUES
51 PEOPLE TO KNOW
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Portfolio Kitchen & Home designer David Zebley is responsible for the 2009 Design Excellence Silver Award-winning kitchen and the DEA Silver Award-winning interior bathroom; Portfolio’s Kiria Satalova teamed up with Christian Arnold from Clockwork Architecture + Design to create the 2011 DEA Gold Award-winning project.
winning inspiration

Muse: the goddess or power regarded as inspiring a poet, artist, thinker, or the like.

For some, the inspirational muse is not a goddess but a place—Claude Monet at Giverny or Paul Gauguin in Tahiti. For others, a muse is drawn from events, such as Picasso’s cubist period.

Muses aren’t bound to artistic mediums. Several of KC Magazine’s Edward Tanner Award-winning architectural and design artists look to local muses for inspiration.

For Geri Higgins, CEO of Portfolio Kitchen & Home and 2010 winner of the Edward Tanner Award for interior design, Union Station and its architect, Jarvis Hunt, are influential muses. The Beaux-Arts building reminds Higgins of her Yankee roots, conjuring memories of childhood trips with a beloved aunt to New York through Grand Central Station. “History happens in train stations,” she says.

Hunt was a proponent of the City Beautiful Movement, a philosophy that encouraged the beautification of cities to promote a harmonious social order that would improve citizens’ quality of life. As such, Union Station was built for such a progressive era.

With her new office directly across the street from the 1914 building she refers to as “an architectural gem,” Higgins is enthralled by it daily. “There are lessons to be learned from Union Station about size and scale. It is possible to have a big presence and still be artistically warm.” From the 95-foot ceilings with three, 500-pound chandeliers to the dentil moulding, Higgins finds Hunt’s attention to detail an inspiration—one that Portfolio applies to its own designs.

“Scale, materials, color and design make a room,” Higgins says. “In Union Station a grand scale, top-of-the-line materials, a monochromatic color scheme [with the occasional pop of color] and the effortless flow from one purpose area to another create something extraordinary. We use those same elements to create extraordinary rooms for our clients.”

And then, there is that little something extra. Bold details, incredible craftsmanship and sculptural elements define Union Station; they also help Portfolio create amazing living spaces. “Every material must work in concert and every space needs a focal point. At Union Station it’s the clock. In the kitchens we design, an island covered in gorgeous marble or granite is the focal point,” Higgins explains.
Christian Arnold of Clockwork Architecture + Design, and winner of the Edward Tanner Award for residential design in 2009, finds local artist Laura Berman’s work to be a source of inspiration.

“She has a very sophisticated ability to layer color,” Arnold says of Berman. “Although my favorite pieces are two-dimensional, I see three-dimensional space, which creates an abstracted form of inspiration for the architecture, interior design and product design we create here at Clockwork.”

On her Web site, Berman admits to a love for color, shape, pattern and collecting. In her Umbaroocks print series, the shapes represent 125 rocks she collected in summer 2010 at Topsail Island, North Carolina. The organic, natural effect appeals to and inspires Arnold: “Architectural design in this country is typically very orthogonal and structured. Our interior design work tends to be more fluid and experimental. It seems that clients are more receptive to an expression of soft forms in their interior and certainly in product design.”

For Arnold, Berman’s craft elicits a double-take as he moves beyond the initial glance. “One piece of art can be studied and viewed at different times and produce many different forms of inspiration,” Arnold says. “Her work has a direct connection to the natural environment and thus memories. Likewise, much of our design work is inspired by nature. We incorporate elements of nature in varying forms of refinement to act as storytelling devices.”

Her influences appear to be spilling over into many facets of Clockwork’s designs. “Her art provides an inspiration of color utilization and form generation,” Arnold says. “Recently some of her forms inspired a collection of tables and ottomans for the manufacturer Cabot Wrenn. Her work also has inspired custom rugs and textiles and some conceptual architecture. Additionally, we have included her art within the interior design of some of our projects.”
Opposite Page: Clockwork Architecture + Design has infinite spectacular projects, including this redesigned office space (top) with sandblasted clay tile walls and heavy timber and its Design Excellence Green Award-winning entryway and greatroom. This Page: Clockwork designs beautiful aesthetics for a variety of projects: a custom-designed dining table set on chevron-patterned hardwood, lit by a modern fixture, and the Blacktop Creative project that won the DEA Gold Award for office space (left).
John Rufenacht, the first Edward Tanner Award winner for interior design in 2008, garnished inspiration from his early urban experiences. "I was a farm kid and not raised in Kansas City," says Rufenacht. "We just visited the city from time to time. The greatest example of inspirational work was back in the '70s from the Junior Women's Philharmonic Association Designers' showcase house (now the Symphony Designers' Showhouse). The designers I remember the most are Jack Reece, Tom Price and the Edward Keith team."

Few may remember the shag carpets, avocado green and harvest gold of the '70s as haleyon days for design, but Rufenacht easily picks out the wheat from the chaff. "I just remember those golden days when their showrooms or displays were unique and accessories helped complete the design story. [Reece, Price and Keith] were all dressed in suits and had great personal style and were glad to stop and talk with a kid off the street about their work. I think the greatest influence came from them all as a total package of being personalities with style and it all seemed to have a sense of drama to me."

Rufenacht successfully has translated that sense of style and drama for a new era of design aficionados searching for spaces of inspiration.

For each award winner, local inspiration has fueled their imaginations, informed their design choices and helped create beautiful spaces that are inspirational in their own right.