



## DESIGNING WOMEN



Two international designers working in very different locations have found a way to thrive in a new, remotely oriented world.

By Marlene Ridgway

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JULIETTE CALAF



Working in two locations, in two different countries, in the midst of a pandemic may seem like an impossible task, especially for interior designers who must work closely with their teams and clients. Yet, these two designers, Juliette Calaf of Juliette Calaf Interiors and Veronica Mishaan, an experienced interior designer, are doing the impossible with more than a touch of style. From San Juan to Miami and New York to Colombia, there's endless inspiration for these designers in dual locations.

Spending more of her time in New York, but working closely with her team in Colombia, Mishaan tackled a few remote hurdles even before the pandemic in 2020. "Our biggest challenge at the beginning was not being able to be physically in the office at all times with the design team," according to Mishaan. "But we've mastered this and have been able to be productive as a team in two countries. This was a great plus when COVID-19 happened, because we already had the ability to work remotely."

Both designers stress the importance of their teams and how working in two locations opened the door for more and more opportunities. "As my business started to grow, I found myself constantly traveling between the two, and I knew there had to be a better way," says Calaf, who spends the majority of her time in San Juan. "Our style was easy to incorporate

into both markets, and having offices in both Miami and San Juan was a natural, organic move for us. It has increased our efficiency and allowed us to take on more work. While we have always designed wherever our clients need us, we are now more accessible and have more in-person time with our clients."

For Calaf, the pull toward design kept coming again and again. "People continued to ask me to help with their spaces and along came Parsons, and it hasn't stopped since then." Working in two locations, San Juan and Miami, it comes as no surprise that Calaf draws heavily on travel for inspiration and describes her style as collected. "I love bringing together styles and eras in a different way," Calaf says. "It's important to create a collection of my client's life experiences. I want to tell a story through their things. It can be something old, something inherited or something new. That way each space becomes unique." This appreciation for detail shines through Calaf's work, which often feels personal and one of a kind.

Each of these designers draw inspiration from American designer Kelly Wearstler, founder and principal of an eponymous firm, for her own style, and especially her wallpaper. "Wallpaper is really having a moment," according to Calaf. "It used to have horrible connotations, but it has been really elevated. There's all of these beautiful textures and papers and designs, and in the right place it



Juliette Calaf's collected style is a true showcase of her clients. She tries to infuse their personality into each space and lift the experience.





PHOTOS BY TAWFICK ESFRIELLA

## If you could work/live anywhere in the world, where would it be and why?

**“I’m living my dream** — I love working and living in New York. The culture, the arts, and the high standards are a constant source of inspiration for me,” says Mishaan.



**“I love working where I am** — in this day and age, we’re not limited and can travel to clients wherever they need us,” says Calaf.

can change the way you feel when you walk in a room.” Mishaan explains that Wearstler’s bold ability to mix and match has made her an expert.

Mishaan has a Quantitative Economics degree from Tufts University, but her draw toward art began at a very young age as her interest in oil painting grew. That connection to art continued as she graduated. “My mom had started a design firm and I started working with her. Ever since I was very little, I’ve been inspired and learned from the amazing spaces that my mother and grandmother created.” Mishaan realized after graduating that she wanted to pursue a career in the arts, and that interior design was another form of three-dimensional art. “What I liked most was that at a young age I could feel the difference between spaces, such as a well-finished space and well-functioning spaces. I always

appreciated that,” says Mishaan.

“I honestly believe the best school is life experience,” according to Mishaan. From those experiences, her personal style developed into what it is today. “I would say my style is definitely not minimalist,” she says. “I like a lot of geometric figures and combining materials like fabrics, metals, and ceramics. As in painting, texture is what makes depth and it’s the same for interiors. My style is a little 80s with modernism.”

Mishaan focuses on the positive elements of working in the two locations. “The benefit of being in the U.S. is the size of the market, but of course this is also a great challenge, as it means more competition,” she says. “Another benefit is that we are able to bring custom-made millwork and furniture from Colombia to the U.S. market. And we can offer fabrics and products manufactured in the U.S. to our



PHOTO COURTESY OF VERONICA MISHAAN

**Veronica Mishaan’s designs have a unique layered look. Combining materials and mixing and matching creates depth in each space on which she works.**

Colombian clients.”

Calaf benefits from her personal structure when handling the challenges. “I have a lot of processes. I have a process for every step of the way,” which also helps with new struggles in this ever-changing industry. “With two offices in different locations, the challenge is managing the calendar and staying on track. We have to be sure all dates are triple-checked and accounted for to avoid letting anything slip through the cracks.” 