



The world was seemingly waiting for Kelly Wearstler. The glamour of old Hollywood, the daredevil approach to creation and the mixed use of all things fabulous and grand had vanished with the end of the antecedent golden Los Angeles era. Someone had to revive what was the most magnetic time of the previous century and someone had to remind the world of the sultry allure and magical charm of elegant glitz.

Wearstler emerged on the uber-minimalist scene of the '90s and brought back that Hollywood Regency style with a little extra drop of noir for good measure. Wearstler is that ultimate Los Angeles designer who seems to be able to do it all: she's a mum, a wife, an interior designer and a celebrity.

And then there are all the businesses: her immaculate Melrose store in Los Angeles, an all-encompassing online store, plus collaborations with some of the most interesting brands in the business including The Rug Company and Lee Jofa wall coverings and fabrics. Not to forget the applauded hotel designs she did for the Viceroy Hotels and Resorts and the restaurant design for Bergdorf Goodman's 8th floor BG in Manhattan.

A long way from home the designer clicked her heels, put in some serious graft, and slowly built her empire.

Born in a small beach town in South Carolina, the glamour-inducing designer was first and foremost inspired by her mother – a closet interior designer and antique dealer who would often paint rooms new colours while Wearstler was at school. Today she quotes Peggy Guggenheim and Doris Duke as her ultimate style icons: two women who have believed in beauty and surrounded themselves with it, collected art and travelled the world – not unlike Wearstler who carries a camera and sketchbooks with her all the time, finding inspiration moment to moment.

"I'm curious. It's in my nature," Wearstler

STORY DANIEL SCHEFFLER

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

Fuelled by a passion for history and art, multitasking designer Kelly Wearstler is bringing Hollywood glam back with a modern twist



explains. "My process is fuelled by a love of history and art and I think museums and libraries are the best places to go for inspiration". She even collects vintage, out-of-print and contemporary books and brings back bags from New York's Strand bookstore – partially accounting for her more than 2,000 titles.

"I believe it is imperative for artists and creators to stay curious. You have to keep that hunger and continually educate your eye," she says. Diana Vreeland, ex-*Vogue* editor and glam woman-around-town, used to say "the eye must travel". Wearstler does exactly that – forever on a trip to Paris ➔



ABOVE
Layers of colour and texture in the family room at the Bellagio residence in Bel Air, California. Bellagio is one of Kelly Wearstler's interior design projects.

LEFT
A bar detail at the Evergreen residence on Mercer Island, Washington. Evergreen is another of Wearstler's interior design projects.

PHOTO: LINDA ARREDONDO



ABOVE
Pieces from Wearstler's upcoming Resort 2015 jewellery line

BELOW
The library with a fireplace at the Evergreen residence on Mercer Island, Washington

seeking inspiration and she does so while blogging about her various experiences and multifarious finds as inspiration for her evangelists.

"I do not have a favourite era or movement. Every movement and time in history inspires me," she says. "There are specific nuances and design details that each era of art has to offer. The juxtaposition and sexy tension created through mixing different movements is what [influences] my aesthetic most."

Although Wearstler has been credited as "the presiding grande dame of West Coast interior design" by *The New Yorker*, her style has evolved over the last few years from ultraglam to a more layered approach: detailing in chromes and bronzes all the way to combining 20th century French furniture into her interior creations.

She's also taken a turn into jewellery which allows

her to infuse some of her love for noir and the macabre. Walking around Los Angeles on a sunny day, you'll spot a gold hand cut off at the wrist dangling around a soy-latte drinking intellectual's neck as she carries around some Proust.

And so Los Angeles does play a role in Wearstler's world, as for most people with where they choose to settle if it is out of sheer love. "One of my favourite things about LA is that it is a city that is not entrenched in any one tradition. It embraces change and has an affinity for risk takers," she says.

She sees it like this: the old gets the respect it deserves while the new is always welcome. Los Angeles also historically plays into the whole wellness factor that has awoken in parts of the world and she is greatly aware of that. "I am interested in feeding the things that contribute in a meaningful and positive way to the studio, my family, my life," she

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RIGHT
The zen room at the Evergreen residence on Mercer Island, Washington

says. "The vibe is soulful – laid-back cool." But besides that inexplicable energy, there is also the superb California weather and nature for kilometres around which Wearstler sees as a prominent part of design.

"I always incorporate organic elements into my spaces, from marble and wood to stones and minerals. The easy elegance and raw glamour of the West Coast [influences] my aesthetic so much," she says. But she isn't alone in the love for Los Angeles – some say it is having a heyday yet again and it's evident with its youthful yet sophisticated lifestyle that is attracting and converting even diehard New Yorkers.

Asking Wearstler what her next steps are, she smiles. Right now, she's busy with four residential projects as well as a new hotel brand. The first hotel opens in San Francisco next spring, followed

by Los Angeles in autumn, and then will be Austin, Texas.

"I am also working on a new lighting collection which launches in the summer, and fabric and bedding collections that will launch in spring. There are also new furniture collections, as well as jewellery and fashion accessories – we have beautiful new limited-edition silk scarves that are completely handcrafted and hand-painted," she says.

By the sound of things, Wearstler is diversifying into all new and exciting avenues and that is what excites her. "The cross-pollination between departments at our studio is what keeps me going. It is the greatest thrill to see the different modalities fuel one another creatively," she says.

So take it from Wearstler: "Take risks, love colour and stay curious." **T**

MILESTONES



1995

Creates her company, Kelly Wearstler Interior Design Studio

1998

Takes on her first hotel project – the Avalon Hotel Beverly Hills

2004

Publishes her first book, *Modern Glamour*

2006

Publishes her second book, *Domicilium Decoratus*

2006

Designs the iconic BG restaurant at Bergdorf Goodman in New York

2007

Opens her boutique on 7th floor of Bergdorf Goodman

2008

Appears as a guest judge on Bravo TV show *Top Design*

2009

Publishes her third book, *Hue*

2011

Opens Kelly Wearstler flagship boutique in Los Angeles

2012

Publishes her fourth book, *Rhapsody*

2012

Launches online boutique, kellywearstler.com