

BALANCE AND RESTRAINT

Designer Jiun Ho's contemporary interiors and furnishings reflect an artist's eye for scale and proportion

WRITTEN BY Eliza Cross



Decades before he launched his luxury design company or traveled around the world, and long before he knew what he wanted to be when he grew up, Jiun Ho's parents gave him a childhood toy that sparked a lifelong passion for architecture.

"One of my first toys was a set of Legos," Jiun says. "I could spend hours as a young child absorbed in building houses and filling them with furniture." Jiun grew up in Malaysia's capital city, Kuala Lumpur, and when he was in elementary school his parents began rewarding him for good grades with trips to other countries such as Japan and Korea.

"Traveling opened my eyes," Jiun says. "I loved experiencing different cultures, seeing the beautiful buildings

This page, from top: Designer Jiun Ho is photographed in his atelier and studio, Jiun Ho de Jia ("The House of Jiun Ho," in Chinese). A renovated 1920s factory, the space is also used as a gallery and event space. | This detail shows *In Motion*, a sculpture Jiun Ho made with lightweight metal. Photos: Ethan Kaplan





This page, clockwise from top: A light fixture by Ingo Maurer illuminates an airy living room, where a grand piano takes center stage. Greek key artwork is by David Ortins. | A pair of original production Eames armchairs flank a reclaimed wood coffee table. The sofa is from the Jiun Ho furniture collection. Prints are by Antoni Tàpies. | The St. Cere Chair and Malacca Daybed are from the Jiun Ho furniture collection. The Soleil Pendant is by Jiun Ho for Boyd Lighting. Photos: Matthew Millman





This page, from top: A rustic space in the lower gallery at Jiun Ho de Jia features early 19th-century glove molds from a Parisian flea market. An Italian mouth-blown glass tree branch sculpture rests atop a Jiun Ho furniture collection Chenonceau dining table surrounded by Usse chairs. Photo: Ethan Kaplan | A vintage childhood study table is topped by an antique Chinois vase. Prints are by Antoni Tàpies. Photo: Matthew Millman

Harmonious Design

JUN HO'S INTERIORS are balanced, precise and globally inspired. He shares seven elements that influence his approach, whether he's designing a commercial office space or a high-end home.

1. My design philosophy always begins with my architectural training. When I approach a project, the first thing I do is examine the architecture. The basis – that is, the architecture – has to be correct before we commence with anything else.
2. Volume, scale and proportion are very important to me. Sometimes moving something a quarter of an inch will make a difference, and I am meticulous about getting the proportions just right in a space.
3. I feel it's very important for the spaces I design to reference the local environment. The color palette and materials should also reflect the location. This is one way I make the space come alive and give it soul; otherwise it could be any interior, anywhere in the world.
4. The project has to reflect the personality of the clients, because they're the ones who will live in the space. When we're finished with a project, the space looks and feels like the client has lived there for many years.
5. I bring a world view to my projects. I believe the designer should be able to only pick up the essence of a space and elevate it to an international level.
6. My Asian background taught me the value of balance. In an interior space I'm always working to achieve balance, from contrasting a busy pattern or texture with something more restrained, to figuring out the optimum size and placement of objects in a room.
7. Harmonious interior design is always about managing and implementing the details. Details make a space, but only if every aspect is flawlessly executed.

and gardens, learning about the area's history and trying new foods." He vowed to someday have a career that would allow him to travel and explore the world.

In the early 1990s, Jiun moved to the United States to study interior architecture at Iowa State University. "My impressions of the U.S. were based largely on television, where I'd seen cities like New York and Los Angeles," he says. "Ames, Iowa, was quite a departure, but I loved the rolling green hills and my year at the university."

He transferred the following year to the International Academy of Merchandising and Design in Chicago to earn his degree in interior architecture. After being recruited by several international architectural and design firms, his first post-college job took him back to his roots. "In 1995 the economy in Malaysia was booming and the Petronas Twin Towers — the world's tallest twin towers — were being built," Jiun says. He designed many of the interior office spaces and received recognition and more offers. He later moved to San Francisco where he began working for a hospitality company and designing hotels in Asia and Australia. During this time he also began providing interior design services for a select group of high-end clients.

"I was designing an apartment for a client in Taipei, and she said, 'I want you to create something for me that no one else has,'" Jiun says. "She asked me to design some one-of-a-kind furnishings and accessories for her house. I had manufacturing connections due to my time in the hotel business, so I ended up creating about 40 custom pieces — everything from chairs and beds to light fixtures and floor coverings."

The rest, as they say, is history. At 26 years old, he launched a full-service interior design firm, Jiun Ho, Inc., and the Jiun Ho Collection, a line of high-end furniture and lighting. He debuts a new collection each year and his products are carried in showrooms across the world, including 10 in the United States. His interior design portfolio includes commercial projects such as the Michelin two-star restaurant Saison and Revel Spa in San Francisco, as well as numerous luxury hotels, resorts and private homes around the world.

Jiun says that his residential work influences his hospitality and commercial work, and vice versa. "More and more, the big hotel groups are trying to develop cozy interiors that feel like home," Jiun says. "On the flip side, most of my clients are well traveled and sometimes they say, 'These are my favorite hotels in the world. If I could, I'd live there permanently.'"

Susan McCullough



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Hans Reiser commissioned Jiun Ho to design two residential projects — a condominium and family home in San Francisco. “I collect art and antiques, and I’m very interested in design,” Reiser says. “What I appreciate about Jiun Ho is his architectural vision and attention to detail. He has an innate design sense that is reflected in his use of colors and materials, and a balanced way of bringing together all of the elements of a space.”

Jiun renovated an old warehouse in San Francisco’s SOMA district to house the company’s headquarters. Built in the 1920s, the 12,000-square-foot building used to be a metal fencing company. “We demolished everything down to bare walls and floors, and rebuilt the space from the ground up,” Jiun says. “Today it’s a gallery, studio and design lab where our



Tucked in the corner of a master bedroom, a chair with bold, curved lines pairs with a Saarinen side table and vintage armoire accented by an Indian rug underfoot. Photo: Matthew Millman

clients can experience our products and services in person and I can showcase the works of artists I admire.”

Jiun named the gallery Jiun Ho de Jia, which translates to “the house of Jiun Ho” in Chinese. “I created the House of Jiun Ho to help others experience a different lifestyle,” he says. “Good design and luxury should bring a measure of joy to your everyday life.” ■

Eliza Cross (www.elizacross.com) is a senior contributing editor for *W&A* and the author of six books, including the award-winning *Family Home of the New West*.

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