



DESIGNER



Jiun Ho – Designer

Drawing creative inspiration from his many travels across the globe, Jiun Ho is a true Renaissance man—product designer, interior decorator, collector, and gallerist.

From where does your passion for art, travel, and design stem?

My passions for art, travel, and design stem from my mother who had an adventurous spirit and a passion for the unknown. My parents were public school teachers in Malaysia and they would save every penny they could to travel the world to experience different cultures from the people, to the food, to the arts. When I was 8 years old, as a reward for getting good grades, they took me on a trip to Japan and Korea. Thus began a restlessness and yearning to experience new cultures, the unexpected, and to find hidden gems. My mother was a foodie—even when it was not popular—and taught me about the refined sensuous enjoyment of good food. Through her I developed my keen interest and enjoyment of art, food, design, and travel.

What land or travel experience has inspired you the most? Why?

My travels to South America. The continent is blessed with an array of destinations and activities, cradled in the splendors of nature. Over the course of my many trips I have developed a deep passion for the continent and its people. You haven't really traveled until you've taken on South America. Thirteen countries strong, the continent is home to astounding natural and cultural wonders, including the snowcapped peaks of the Andes, the colors of sand of the Atacama Desert, thousands of kilometers of magnificent white-sand beaches, captivating colonial towns, indigenous villages, and the surreal, blindingly white salt flats of the Salar de Uyuni.

You've traveled to more than 100 countries. Are there any places still left on your bucket list? Are there any you return to again and again for inspiration?

My next trips are to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, explore untouched and untainted Bhutan, and discover the secrets of Galapagos. When you travel as much as I do, people often ask me what my favorite country is. My answer is always the same: Thailand. Some will then nod in acknowledgment while others look surprised especially for someone so well traveled. They feel like it's too touristy. But no place in the world is perfect and despite its pitfalls, Thailand remains an incredible country with a unique wealth of natural and inner human beauty. Whenever I go to Thailand I always plan a few days to spend in Bangkok to recharge—tasting great food, looking for amazing antiques, and enjoying the great variety of people living and visiting the city.

Interior design is a great expression of creativity. How did you get involved in the design world?

As a child, my first toy was a set of Legos. I built Lego houses and pieces of furniture. I would spend hours building the most elegant and perfect Lego structures. I've always had a passion for architecture and design. I enjoy design because I believe that good design enhances people's everyday lives.

You also design home furnishings and accessories. What is your design approach to this side of your creative life?

I like to say that great design is taking something expected and making it unexpected. Design is all about style rather than fashion, whether it's a space or a product, and always needs to reflect a sense of place, culture, and history. Balance and harmony are the hallmarks of my design vision. I like natural palettes and textures. I like to let the materials speak for themselves. Textures against clean lines; rich dark woods against simple fabrics; basic shapes and forms that are both challenging yet inviting. Ultimately my designs bridge cultures, ages past, and those yet to come. My pieces are flirtatious, elegant, tranquil, and classic.

You have called your new gallery "a place that blends art, design, culinary, and the experience of living from around the world." Please explain this philosophy and how you bring it to life here.

My lifestyle exploration gallery is named Jiun Ho de Jia, the House of Jiun Ho in Chinese. I designed it to break the bounds of traditional art and antique galleries. It blends art, cuisine, design, and "the experience of living." This San Francisco gallery/showroom/studio boasts art, objects, and antiques from around the world in addition to my signature collections and provides visitors a look into the global cultures that have inspired me throughout my career, while giving them a culturally transformative experience.

Please give an example of one of your projects in which you have incorporated the cultures of the places you visit.

Revel Spa, a modern day-spa in San Francisco, is a good example of a project of mine that incorporated the local culture with an Asian sensibility. When planning the 2,800-square-foot experience, I incorporated elements to ensure the space reflected the client's Vietnamese descent blended with the San Francisco landscape (given the spa is close to Golden Gate Park — the largest city park). I incorporated artifacts, artwork, antiques, framed photographs I had taken on my travels, and a 150-year-old house, shipped from Vietnam and integrated into the spa. As you enter, you walk into a tranquil oasis in the heart of San Francisco. From architecture to ambience, unique history to sophisticated interiors, Revel Spa achieves an inviting and relaxing environment of pure escape. With art and detailed design reflecting the spirit of Hanoi, the rich history from the cultural center of Vietnam blends with a meticulous attention to the latest in relaxation techniques and technology to create a meditative and rejuvenating experience. From the sidewalk outside looking through the front window, you could be on a sidewalk in Hanoi as a cluster of black birdcages can be seen hovering above the reception desk, which is floating on a narrow pedestal, creating a sense that all the objects in the bright yet tranquil space are levitating.

What is your most memorable culinary moment in all your travels?

I have been to most of the finest restaurants all around the world but my most memorable culinary experience has to be dining at El Bulli in Rose, north of Barcelona. I took my mother a year before she passed away from terminal cancer. El Bulli left a lasting impression on me. It wasn't the intensity of taste, with shifting textures and notes that lasted longer than Pavarotti's C. It wasn't that I felt I had to close my eyes in a crowded room to savor and surf every wave of flavor. It was simply, in the end, I think, the deliciousness. Chef Ferran Adria's creations made me feel free to think and to feel food, to orchestrate my mood...El Bulli was more a flavor theater than a restaurant.

What advice or tips would you offer to other travelers looking to experience design and culture in new places?

Abandon the mock European-style trips for more authentic experiences. I would recommend that they not seek the familiar but rather the unknown. It is easy to stick with what the guidebooks recommend, eat where everyone else eats, and visit all the famous sights. The greatest sights, people to meet, and experiences are off the beaten path. Finding the gems that are simply hidden away from the regular tourist areas is where one will truly experience the design and culture.

How do you define luxury?

Luxury can be the simplest of things, for example, using perfectly ironed linens on a daily basis, eating take out food on beautiful well-designed china, etc. Luxury in design should be inspiring and bring joy, thus heightening the quality of the experience of living.

IMAGE GALLERY



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AN EVENING OF GLOBAL INSPIRATION

On July 18th, designer Jiun Ho hosted this extraordinary experience at his gallery in San Francisco. [View the event gallery](#)