

# INTERIOR DESIGN

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*room to explore*

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**Clockwise from top left:** From New York's Kips Bay Decorator Show House in 2007, the lounge that helped spark interest in a reality show about Amy Lau Design. The firm's principal. A velvet-covered sofa, ikat pillows, and flokati rug sold under the Nate Berkus name on the cable network HSN. The principal of Nate Berkus Associates.

European immigrants—her mother is an architect, her scientist father an amateur woodworker—Karady kept her wits while cast-mates “forgot they were on TV,” she says. Nevertheless, she notes the role that producers played in shaping the footage: “I spilled paint in one of the episodes, and it wasn’t a huge drama, but they showed it over and over and over.”

Since *Top Design*, she has acquired an entertainment lawyer and a seemingly unlimited supply of interns. She jokes that some fans have even learned how to pronounce her first name if not her last,

that the makeover audience is “primarily real people, home owners.” But in *Top 10*, a magazine-format show launched since his appointment last fall, a parade of talking heads, from Jonathan Adler to Karim Rashid, alternates with eye candy practically ripped from the pages of shelter magazines.

Designers on television are judged on their looks, too. Karady admits she was unnerved by her own image on tape: “You wore your own clothes, did your own makeup. I saw one episode and was like, ‘God, I need to brush my hair.’” Twin sisters Jayne and Joan Michaels of 2Michaels were pressed to wear bright red lipstick after being cast in another show, *Double Vision*, as a result of an article in *Interior Design*. “You have to be really careful with your image. You cannot cheapen yourself,” Joan Michaels says.

When the shows finally aired, she found the attention stressful. “At first we couldn’t stand watching,” she recalls. “Then I starting liking it.” This despite having to relive the scene when the home



**Opposite, clockwise from left:** The guest room that Ondine Karady, principal of her namesake firm, designed for a challenge on the second season of Bravo’s *Top Design*. Karady with her chow, Little Bear. Jayne and Joan Michaels of 2Michaels. Their *Idea House* girl’s bedroom’s custom bed, inspired by Italian 1960’s design.



which sounds a lot like karate. Fans have also stopped her as she shopped with clients at upscale New York showrooms—not exactly the sort of places she found herself during filming. “You try to make it upscale, but you’re at Pier 1,” she says.

HGTV senior vice president of programming, development, and production Freddy James explains

owner screamed epithets at her and ordered her out. Despite watching herself cry. “It was like being in boot camp,” she says.

Though the \$1,000-per-room budget was absurd and the pressure imposed by the accelerated production schedule ridiculous, Jayne Michaels feels she became “addicted to the breakneck pace.” She also gets



credit from her sister for having an innate sense of what looks good on TV, and the experience has made her off-camera work bolder. Producers particularly prodded the twins to use stronger colors in their TV rooms. "Just because it pops in person does not mean it will pop on television," James warns. The camera-ready citrus orange that 2Michaels chose for a child's bedroom at the Idea House in Bridgehampton, New York, last summer was incontrovertible evidence of a lesson learned well.

Following my friend Amy Lau's 2007 debut at the Kips Bay Decorator Show House in New York, Bravo asked her to star in a reality series about day-to-day life at Amy Lau Design. Guessing the price of that sort of fame, many of us urged caution. Although Lau still thinks about a television career, she shocked network executives with her decision. They said that no one else had ever walked away. —Craig Kelllogg

