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Jona Collins' (jonacollins.com) early fascination with fabrics and costume design, combined with a preference for "cutting-edge traditional" style, has brought Collins' work to HGTV's "Double Take" where designers are challenged to recreate her luxury



Jona Collins: Classic with a cutting edge

San Francisco Bay area designer Jona Collins is known for a signature style that combines traditional elegance with cutting-edge technique. Describing her interiors as "diverse as an artist's palette," Collins said she continually challenges herself with designs that reach beyond the boundaries of a single style.

Some of that cutting-edge style can be attributed to an early fascination with fabrics, costume and fashion design. "Growing up, I wanted to be a fashion designer," Collins said. "I was sewing at a very young age alongside my mother and found fabrics, like silks and silk taffeta, to be the most wonderful experience. This obsession led me to create my own line while living in Los Angeles, where I designed and created stage costumes for performers in the music industry."

Eventually, Collins opened a boutique and her design projects expanded into furniture and high-end interior design. "With my strong opinions and passion for design, it was only natural that my business would lead me into interior design," she said.

It has also established Collins as a leader in her field, and a regular on HGTV's *Double Take*, where designers and homeowners challenge themselves to re-create luxurious interiors on a budget.

Collins said she is inspired by the "glamour and simple sophistication of Billy Baldwin, as well as Elsie de Wolfe's fearless approach to modern domestic

interiors." But she's also quick to add that her inspiration also comes from color, a piece of art or fabric, a characteristic or motion, or the architecture of the space itself. "My life experiences take me there."

What styles, products are your clients asking for?

Elegant, comfortable and tailored. Clients are more careful with their budgets today. I work towards creating a fabulous space by combining a single more expensive piece, like a Julia Gray coffee table or Holly Hunt sofa, with great flea market finds like French fauteuil chairs that can be reupholstered.

How has the recession affected the high-end design client?

They're taking a bit more time to make sure it is the right piece ... trusting that I will educate them as to what is most important. (They are) moving forward, although instead of carte blanche for the entire room, it could be one or two pieces at a time. It has also been an inspirational time for me. I need to be more creative for my clients so they can have a beautiful home and not feel overwhelmed.

What's the best room you've ever done and why?

I have had the wonderful opportunity to design many beautiful spaces of all depths of elegance, although the one space that captured me was a kitchen I designed in Pescadero, Calif., that can be seen on my Web site. This space forced me to create deep

out-of-the-box thoughts, draw my story on paper, and then search for the most interesting craftsmen and pieces of art that were custom created just for this space. The island's countertop, for example, has carvings of bear claws re-created from a bear's footprint. This piece was also created sight-unseen, with only my sketch as a template. I waited breathlessly for the crate to arrive and it was perfect!

How did you get "discovered" by HGTV's *Double Take*?

I submitted pictures from my portfolio and was invited in for a screening. To my delight, I was chosen for a few episodes instead of just one.

What one accessory or piece of furniture can really raise a room's "elegance" factor?

A grand piece of art; exquisite draperies adorned with a rich fabric; a fabulous chandelier.

What's the most expensive item you've purchased for a client or project?

Original art by Tom Hughes; an 18th century Normandy wedding armoire purchased at an antique location in San Francisco; a Holly Hunt sofa through Kneedler Fauchere; an antique Rococo mirrored coffee table, to name a few.

Colors — what are your favorites, do you have a signature color, are you gravitating to a particular palette?



I love color and depending on the space and client will make my selection from there. Some of my favorites are soothing blues like Quiet Moments by Benjamin Moore. Philadelphia Cream is a feel-good color. I will then change it slightly to custom create the hue that I want to resonate. In some of the modern spaces I will play with tone-on-tone stripes, like a matte/shine sheen black on black for a foyer. It makes a big statement in a subtle way.

How much of your work is vacation homes/primary residences?

About 75% percent of my work is primary residences and the other 25% is vacation homes.

If you were invited to design a new line of home furnishings, what would your product line consist of/look like?

I currently have a line that can be seen on my Web site JonaCollins.com. The furnishings have a western elegance with a rustic charm. Since relocating back to the San Francisco Bay area I have enjoyed creating pieces with a '40s flair — velvet wing chairs with elegant channeling and double welting ... chaise lounges with covered buttons and scrolled back ... carved wood pieces as well. I have a strong desire to design a line of upholstered pieces combining this '40s flair with a bit of modern. Elegant, comfortable, rich fabrics and exotic woods.

How do you relax/unwind?

A wonderful ride on my horse through green pastures, open spaces and big blue skies, cherishing the views, the sound of rustling trees and quiet moments. And I volunteer regularly at NCEFT. The program utilizes the movement of highly-trained horses to provide beneficial physical and occupational therapy and equine assisted activities for (children) with special needs. **DIT**

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