

# CAROLINE BURKE DESIGNS

Designing and reviving spaces with an eye on practicality, longevity and classic beauty.

WRITTEN BY CONSTANCE DUNN

"If you watch little children, and see what they're doing at a very young age," says designer Caroline Burke, "it's probably what they should be doing at an older age." What was her childhood playtime obsession? "I spent hours and hours setting up Barbie's townhouse," she says with a laugh. "I never actually wanted to play Barbie. I just wanted to set up and rearrange her furniture."

These days, the accomplished designer, who runs an eponymous interior design firm, finds joy and creative balance in projects big and small. A large project will have her collaborating with architects—Pritzkat and Johnson, Laney LA and Grant Fitzpatrick of KAA among them, along with Doug Leach and Louis Tomaro—and contractors to craft a home's interior from the ground up. "This includes selecting all materials for bathrooms, kitchens and floors, as well as all the furniture design," she explains. A small project, on the other hand, might span only one or two rooms. "A new kitchen design or bathroom remodel design," says Caroline. "Or perhaps a client wants me to design and furnish a new bedroom, dining or family room."



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## CAROLINE BURKE DESIGNS & ASSOCIATES

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(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) MOROCCAN-INSPIRED TOUCHES ENLIVEN AN OUTDOOR LIVING ROOM; CAROLINE BURKE; SUBTLY CONTRASTING TEXTURES ADD RICHNESS TO A BEDROOM RETREAT; CAROLINE'S CUSTOM FURNITURE LINE ALLOWS HER TO DESIGN THE PERFECT PIECES FOR HER CLIENTS.



A specialty of the designer is her work with real estate agents, who bring her clients who have just purchased a home. It's a business niche that has grown in recent times, spurred on by a design-show culture that's raised the bar of expectation among buyers when it comes to how a home, in 2019, should look. "Real estate agents can have someone to partner up with and hand off their clients to," she says. "Most newly purchased homes need either redecorating or, at the very least, a bit of refreshing and some new furniture."

*Flexibility, practicality and classic beauty* are keywords of Caroline's business and aesthetic. Her line of furniture, for instance, was created out of a need to offer high-caliber, custom goods that were not available in the marketplace. "If you see an upholstered piece in a project on my website," she explains, "we designed and manufactured it. This control allows me to offer my clients quality furniture pieces that fit their rooms properly—and at a discounted cost." Ergonomics is another focus. A room must not only be beautiful and transformative, she adds, but feel good physically too.

Her Manhattan Beach studio is a creative hub where she finds clients are most comfortable and inspired. "We'll do a working meeting," says Caroline. "We have an extensive library of resources that include fabrics and furniture styles, along with tile, finishes and a variety of other materials. I'm always collecting the latest and greatest." As a client-centric designer, she points out the necessity of knowing the desires of her clients. "We don't just listen to them," she states. "We hear them and understand what they want. It's the key to a successful project."

For Caroline, taking care of clients is thinking about them for the long haul—years after the initial flash of a project has faded. "The bulk of my work is timeless," she says. "I am not a really trendy designer." The bigger pieces in a home are going to be classic, she explains, while splashier touches are found in smaller pieces, such as a side table or pillows. "Later on, when the client wants to change it up, and add some more funk or fun," she adds thoughtfully, "it's not costing them a lot to do that."



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