

PREMIERE ISSUE

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LUXURY RESIDENCES AND FINE DESIGN

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High Design

INSIDE THE WORLD'S
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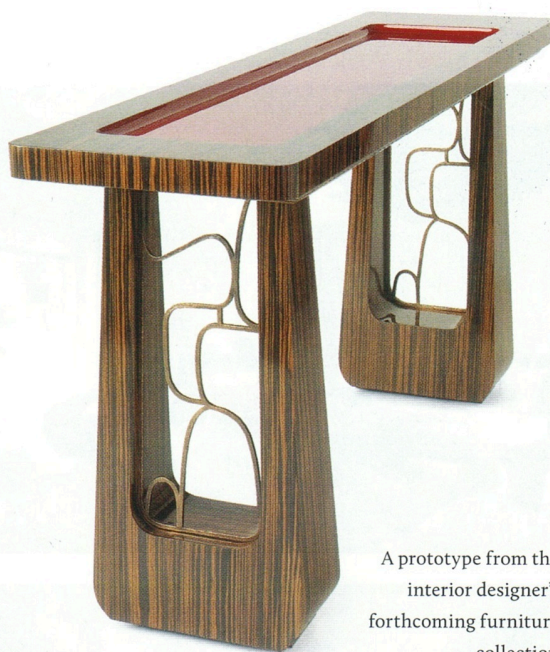
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A Behnke-designed dining room in
Los Angeles's Bel Air neighborhood

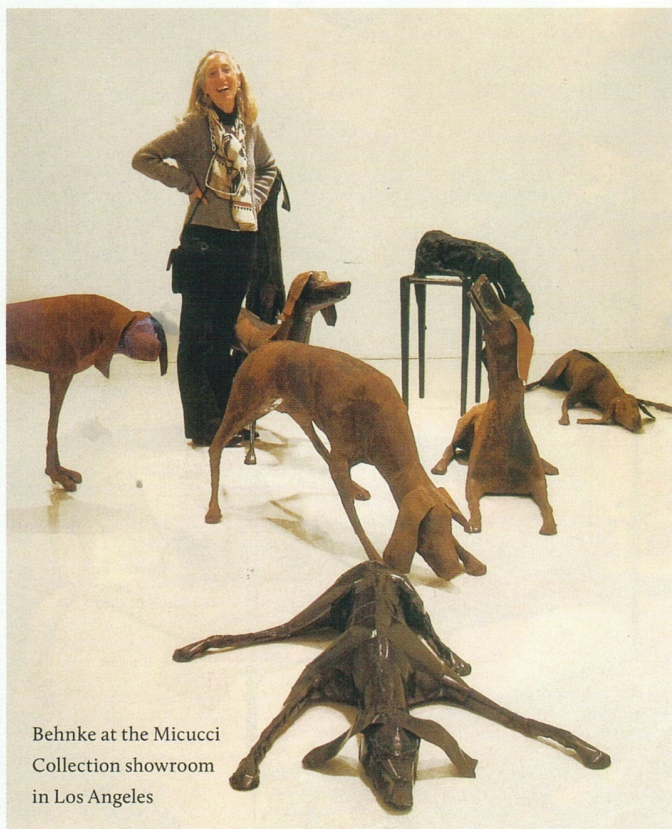


SINCE FOUNDING HER eponymous company 15 years ago, the Los Angeles-based interior designer Joan Behnke has worked with myriad clients, from tycoons and professional athletes to the proprietors of boutique hotels. Her projects have been as varied as her clients—private planes, beach houses, penthouses, golf courses—and they have spanned the globe, from Southern California and Washington, D.C., to Tokyo and Abu Dhabi. Behnke is, quite simply, a master at scale: The interiors she creates for homes as large as 60,000 square feet still feel intimate and personal. Comfortable working in a range of styles—from midcentury to Moroccan, Cape Cod to Provençal—she approaches her projects with an eye toward one-of-a-kind finds, whether that means collaborating with craftspeople on custom furnishings or sourcing antiques worldwide. *Robb Report Home & Style* caught up with Behnke at her firm's new location, in Beverly Hills, where she was working on a host of projects, including her inaugural furniture collection, which she hopes to introduce by the end of the year. [SAMANTHA BROOKS]



A prototype from the interior designer's forthcoming furniture collection

Joan Behnke



Behnke at the Micucci Collection showroom in Los Angeles

MIDDLE: KARYN MILLET; BOTTOM: FABIO MICUCCI; OPPOSITE: ERHARD PFEIFFER



What is one of your strengths as a designer?

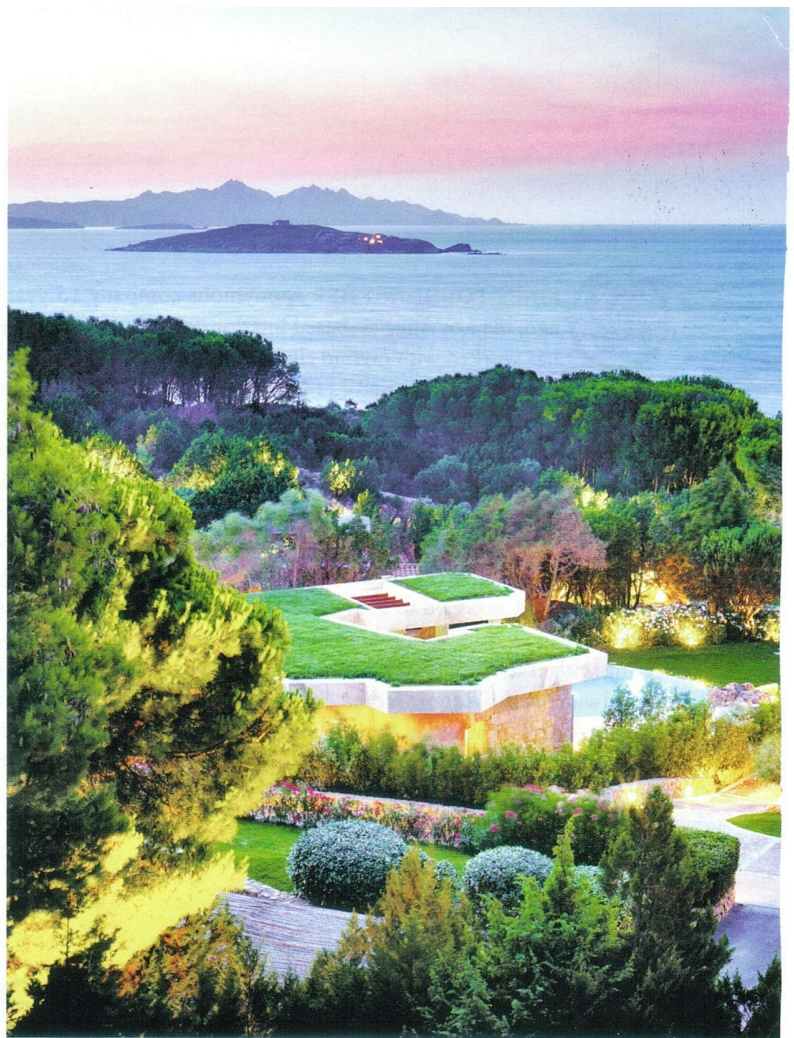
Balance. I know when to use restraint, which can sometimes mean advising a client not to put five TVs in the master bath.

Your most challenging project to date?

A hotel in Sardinia where everything had to come from Italy. The challenge was to update an already unique style and make it fresh and hip but still reference its 1960s roots [see page 48].

Which of your projects would you most like to live in?

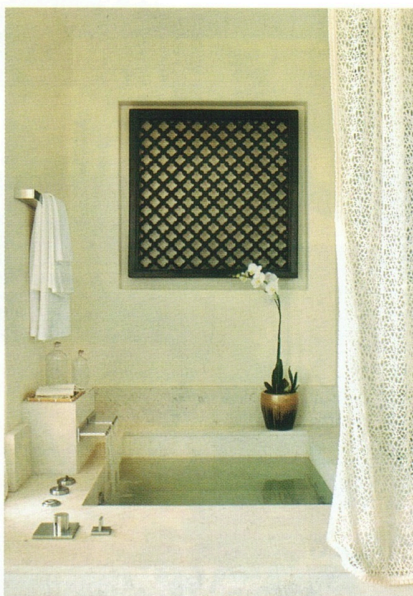
There's something about a house we did in Malibu [above]. It's a very relaxed home on the beach with interesting art, antique finishes, beautiful plasterwork, and comfortable furniture. Your blood pressure lowers right when you walk inside and look through to the ocean waves crashing on the sand.



Hotel Design Selective about the hospitality projects she accepts, Behnke avoids situations where she would be forced to sacrifice quality and detail or, as she characterizes it, “knock herself off.” Instead, the designer looks to work on boutique properties where she can create an environment that she sees as “a second home with a more personal statement.”

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Behnke’s hotel designs include Villa Antas (living room shown) at the Hotel Pitrizza, on the Costa Smeralda in Sardinia; the grass-covered rooftop of one of Hotel Pitrizza’s villas; one of the accommodations at Villa Saletta in Tuscany; and a villa at the Mansion at MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

“Clients receive as much of my attention as possible. I’m involved in every step, which is labor- and time-intensive, but it has always been a good business model and sets a high standard.” —JOAN BEHNKE



Residential Design A home need not be large for Behnke to take it under her wing, though most of her projects tend to measure in the 20,000-square-foot range. Whatever the size of the residence, the designer works closely with the architects to ensure there is unity between the build and the interiors, and she obtains, often internationally, one-of-a-kind artistic elements that make homes both large and small feel intimate.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Each of these spaces—a wine cellar, a master bathroom, and an indoor pool—is from a different Behnke-designed home in Los Angeles.

TOP: ERHARD PFEIFFER; BOTTOM: KARYN MILLET; OPPOSITE, MIDDLE LEFT: JON COULTHARD; BOTTOM: SANDRO MICHAELLES FOTOGRAFO

Good Publicity Many of Behnke's clients are referrals who discovered her by seeing examples of her work in a friend's home. The designer created these different living rooms for two Los Angeles clients who are friends. To avoid duplicating her work, Behnke always draws inspiration from a home's unique architecture, as well as from the client's personality.



“We’ve done everything from smaller homes to residences with 25-plus bathrooms. The common denominator is the detail. We love to design with artisans . . . no matter how large or small the project is.” —JOAN BEHNKE

Tech Savvy Behnke sees technology as an important element in her projects, but she avoids what she sees as gimmicky or unnecessary gadgetry. Her kitchens, such as this design in Beverly Hills, are elegantly purposeful with high-quality appliances and other essentials. For home theaters, the use of large TVs instead of projectors is a trend, she says, and basements are being outfitted as gallery-like spaces for the artful display of car collections.



TOP: KARYN MILLET; BOTTOM: ERHARD PEIFFER