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THE INSIDER

NICOLE ALEXANDER

Nicole Alexander used to work behind the bar; now, she designs them—among other things. That’s the abbreviated version of her resounding success as owner of Siren Betty Design, a firm of seven women offering concept ideation, art curation, procurement, purchasing, fabrication and more. *Luxe* talked with her about her company as well as what’s in (and what’s out) this year. sirenbetty.com

How did you learn design? My background is in 3D studio art and history. I decided to launch Siren Betty Design in 2009, and it’s just worked out. I feel very lucky we’ve gotten this far in such a big city.

Describe Siren Betty’s signature style. We really like making a place feel somewhat lived in. We’re into accessorizing—the whole maximalist movement. I love the hunt, searching for unique things.

I recently drove a 26-foot U-Haul across the country collecting pieces for a client. That’s the fun of it.

What’s your take on current trends? I think jewel tones will continue to play a big part in design. People are going to be more playful, incorporating personal trinkets and decorative pieces. Kitsch is going out the door, but color is coming back. Terra cotta is still playing a part, too, in terms of color, tone and texture. We’re seeing a lot of handmade tiles that look a little more organic.



TALKING SHOP

KNEEN & CO.

Mary Jeanne Kneen first discovered her love for fine home products while living in Germany. When she moved to Chicago and opened Kneen & Co. in 2008, it was her way of carrying on the European tradition. After working out of a small location in Lincoln Park for over a decade, Kneen relocated to a bright new space on the corner of Michigan Avenue and Oak Street this year, where she is able to carry a higher volume of product and samples. New to Kneen & Co. are such brands as Vis-a-Vis and Michaël Verheyden. Clients and designers frequently visit together, which works out well for all parties. “It’s like being in a candy store, because there’s always something to find,” says Kneen. “It lets the homeowner be part of the creative process.” kneenandco.com



SAVE THE DATE

NEOCON 2019

One of the world’s leading events for the commercial design industry will gather 50,000 design professionals for three days of networking and learning when it descends on theMart June 10-12. Human-centered design is set to be a key focus of NeoCon 2019, along with outdoor workplaces and the intersection of hospitality and the office. “There has been so much discussion on wellness and the human experience becoming the focus of built environments, and this year we are really going to see it come to life,” says Lindsey Martin, NeoCon’s director of marketing. New this year, NeoCon is collaborating with IIDA to produce curated tours of the latest design and architecture projects throughout the city. neocon.com

