



COURTESY PHOTO

Rush Jenkins and Klaus Baer integrate the traditionally Western with the classically contemporary, as embodied by Ashley Tudor's bronzed skull and antlers.

Designers highlight livable style

WRJ Design Associates
30 S. King St.
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By Jeannette Boner

The feel and function of a Western interior continues to evolve. The log-cabin look, for example, has given way to the contemporary idea of clean lines and bright spaces. But what seems to be the constant is the way form and shape are inspired by the natural world and, in Jackson, framed by the Tetons.

With the opening of their flagship store on King Street, just off Town Square, Rush Jenkins and Klaus Baer, owners of WRJ Design Associates, have worked with clients and artists, collaborators and visionaries to carve the cutting edge of this contemporary evolution of interior Western design.

"Our business is our livelihood, and we are passionate about art," said Jenkins, CEO of the interior design group that opened shop in 2012. "We're always bridging the gaps of Western design and contemporary. It's something that we are constantly trying to do for our clients."

Their resumes and work speak for themselves, a veritable who's who among the famous and well-to-do. Having designed more than 40 exhibitions for Sotheby's, they include among their references the likes of industrial titans Rockefeller and Mellon and leading men and woman in the arts such as Blass and Hepburn, Cash and Streisand.

But whether the customer is local or corporate, the focus of the team is always on the client, with the goal of creating spaces that can be lived in.

"I think people did really want to come out here and surround themselves with that heavy Western feel," Baer said of the traditional Western look.

"Now people are staying here for extended periods of time, and [the design] is a bit more lighter and livable. Lifestyles are changing, and there is an ability for people to come out for longer periods of time."

The shift happened years ago in the Hamptons of Long Island, New York, he said. Where beach cottages proliferated, homeowners began staying for longer periods of time and looking for more livable designs. The phenomenon is now taking place in the Tetons, Baer said, and is largely due to latest trends in telecommuting.

"Nobody lives in a museum," Jenkins said. "Art is not singular. You sit with it, you live with it, it's in the en-



Craig Spankie's mix of natural roughness and clean, contemporary lines epitomizes the style at WRJ Interior Design.

vironment you are in. How can these pieces of art — paintings or textiles, furniture, lamps or rugs — help people appreciate art on a daily basis?"

That's where WRJ Design comes in.

The store is filled with pieces that frame the ideas of contemporary art intersecting with livable style. Representing such artists as Ed and Lee Riddell, Taylor Glenn, Tim Rein, Craig Spankie, Heidi Jung and Ashley Tudor, the store is also filled with exclusive lines from Ralph Lauren Home, Loro Piana and Sempre.

As usual WRJ will play its role in this year's Fall Arts Festival, leading a new faction of the Western Design Conference (see page E10). Additionally, WRJ will feature local art and artists during the festival in its storefront.

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