

Wendy Posard

This Noted California Designer Has
A Keen Sense Of Perfection And Craft

INTERVIEW BY DIANE DORRANS SAEKS



CALIFORNIA DESIGNER WENDY POSARD travels the world to source fine antiques and authentic materials, and to study historical details for the superb residences her thriving company creates.

The founder of the ten year old full-service design and architectural firm, Wendy Posard & Associates, is known for creating elegant, classically inspired and traditional residences.

Posard has had more than sixteen years of experience in the fields of architecture, interior design, planning, and construction of single family residences. Her emphasis is on designing luxury estate and custom-crafted residential projects. Passionate about superbly detailed interiors, she has a particular expert-

ise in designing interior cabinetry and finishes.

Based in San Anselmo, in Marin County, Wendy Posard & Associates works in a range of styles and does not propose a specific architectural aesthetic. She and her team apply a successfully-formulated process of interaction with their clients so each residence is truly one of a kind.

"Our designs evolve from listening to our clients so that we can design and create a unique, practical and appropriate residence," she explains. "We examine the natural features of the site, the aesthetics of any existing structures, and the context and landscape. We work with a rich source of ideas concerning style, materials and details."

OPPOSITE At a 650-acre Cabernet vineyard in Hopland, Northern California, a family ranch house was originally built in the late 1950s and designed by William Turnbull. Wendy Posard and Associates created a larger family compound. Respecting the classic California vernacular, the firm designed an addition with vertical grain Douglas fir paneling, open beam ceiling, and aggregate flooring. A back to back wood burning fireplace sets the outdoor fireplace on axis with the new pool and pool house. Wicker Works furniture from Sloan Miyasato and sisal rugs and textured linens allow for elegance and comfort. RIGHT In Ross, Marin County, a garden cottage retreat has an eclectic mix of found objects from antique dealers through out Northern California and flea markets in Paris. The tall basket is from MARCH, San Francisco and the upholstered wing back chair was custom fabricated from Belmar and Company. Design by Wendy Posard and Associates.



▶ **CH Your firm offers a broad range of services. What is the secret of your success?**

WP We specialize in custom residences and provide highly customized architectural and interior design services. I trade sources with winemakers, boutique hotel owners and curators of museums, rather than with other designers, and have talented specialists on the team. Lori Henle, our senior designer, has an incredible eye for color palettes. We strive for interiors rich in history and quality, and furnish with objects that reflect our clients. Victor Templeton has twenty five years of experience for traditional details in design. He completed a series of iron designs in collaboration with Ferrous Studios that include a twenty seven foot long and twelve foot high all-metal bookcase and rolling library ladder which in style are very much like the massive steel sculptures of Richard Serra.

CH Where did you hone your considerable design skills?

WP Originally, I took numerous drafting classes at Gunn High School in Palo Alto. It is the most magical experience to draw three dimensionally. Becoming an interior designer was a natural offshoot of my later architectural stud-

ies, and I never tire of shopping for beautiful things. I'm self taught, and I read and research constantly. My heroes in interior design are Thierry Despont, Rose Tarlow, London based David Mlinaric, as well as Bunny Williams. I took classes at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, in the architectural department, and rounded out at the University of California, Berkeley.

One assignment at Berkeley was to design a bungalow co-habited by Wallace Shawn and Andre Gregory. The instructor, Richard Fernau, asked that we view the cult film "My Dinner with Andre" and proceed to design for the two radically different personalities. It was a brilliant assignment and it has served me well ever since. A designer's job is to be a good listener and to provide a balanced design with for all parties involved.

CH When did you found your own firm?

WP Wendy Posard & Associates was founded with five employees in the fall of 2000. I started with one exceptional client and over a nine year period the firm has grown strictly on a referral basis. The initial projects in Marin County turned into multiple projects in Malibu, Healdsburg, and beyond.

designer profile



A kitchen in Ross, Northern California was specifically designed to be an extension of the garden and to serve as living space. A relaxed style was created with antique terracotta floors from the south of France and curtains from Sienna Antiques, Petaluma. The chairs around the farm table, each one different, are from Antonio's Antiques in San Francisco. Design by Wendy Posard and Associates.

CH Which design movement has inspired you most?

WP I admire eighteenth century English and French architecture of all kinds. However, I model my practice more closely on the early nineteenth century works of Charles Platt, John Russell Pope, and the elegant works of Delano and Aldrich, and of course our local favorite architect, Willis Polk.

CH Who was a mentor?

WP I was extraordinarily lucky to have been the first employee of Brooks Walker and Greg Warner (of Walker Warner Architects in San Francisco) when they began their very successful partnership.

Brooks' vision for master planning of a site stems from his passion for all things wild and green. Greg's unsurpassed artistic abilities to design beautiful and well thought out buildings gave me a life-long desire to focus on the details.

CH What is the favorite interior you've seen on your travels?

WP The neoclassical interiors of architect Sir John Soane's early nineteenth century residence at 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields in London. It soars four floors, starting with the crypt. This literal museum is ingenious in its interior use

of natural light and rich in its contents of architectural fragments. It becomes a spiritual experience. And, I admire everything Thierry Despont touches: Art, architecture, interiors, product.

CH Favorite piece of furniture?

WP Soane in London makes the Cavaletti Desk, of forged and hand-beaten iron with a Hermès-style burnt orange goatskin leather top.

Gregorious-Pineo (exclusively at Kneedler-Fauchere) furniture collection has superior finishes that are very refined, with clean lines that blend well with all styles.

Our office is crazy about great light fixtures and there are amazing lanterns to be had at JAMB, off of Pimlico Road in London. All the light fixtures at JAMB are handcrafted. They have a substantial weight to them, and make a statement. We admire the proportions and the highest level of craftsmanship. It's my new favorite place to shop.

CH Favorite versatile fabric?

WP I adore the Rogers & Goffigon textile line at the Kneedler-Fauchere showrooms. The quality, natural fibers and soft natural colors are perfection. George Spencer trims are one of my favorite trim resources. They are made of beautiful natural fibers, woven with an authentic,

handmade feel. The color palette is soft, with rich muddy hues inspired from historical design details. George Spencer Designs are available at De Sousa Hughes in San Francisco.

Designer Sandra Jordan designs the most beautiful Prima Alpaca Collection of sumptuous fabrics that can be used for drapery and upholstered wall applications, to create a rich and elegant room environment. The line is available in a palette of over forty four colors, inspired by the wine country in Sonoma, California.

CH What do you love most about being a designer?

WP My inspiration for design springs from the École des Beaux Arts. Architectural studies, and drawing and painting are required components of being a good designer. My passion for hand drawing and use of watercolors is very personally rewarding. In this digital age I continue to strive for historical references and to embrace collaboration with artists and craftspeople. Most recently we had the pleasure of designing an all-stone French country farmhouse with antique timber trusses. We

worked with very talented cabinetmakers in developing French overlay doors with raised belection moldings.

CH How are you changing your practice as the industry evolves?

WP I go through great efforts to study historically accurate detailings for any design concepts. However, all of our working drawings and correspondence with contractors are now fully digital. That is the practical way to work. But CAD will never completely replace the creative process of hand sketching.

CH What advice would you give to young designers?

WP I recommend that all designers and architects travel as much as possible, to study design. I suggest Kyoto in Japan, the Amalfi Coast, Paris, Oxford and Tuscany—especially Florence. It's important to immerse yourself in different parts of the world, such as France or England, and to sketch and photograph as much as possible. It is also essential to continue to study the history of design, so that you enable a sense of the future in architecture and design. ☐

BELOW A secondary staircase in a shingle-style Pacific Heights house in San Francisco, California was decorated with an antique lamp and gate leg table were purchased at Art & Antique Exchange, San Francisco. LOWER RIGHT For the living room of a shingle-style house in Ross, Wendy Posard and Associates created high contrast with antique walnut furniture and eighty yards of Travis Linen fabric with a neutral palette of sea grass and straw yellow linen chairs. The large figurative paintings are from Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco. The chairs are from A. Rudin. The ottoman by Dennis & Leen from Shears and Windows was upholstered in Rose Tarlow fabric.



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