Designer Spotlight: Marie Burgos

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Photo courtesy of Marie Burgos Design

Elegant, sophisticated, tasteful, warm, inviting – these are just several of the adjectives one could use to describe the work of Marie Burgos, the interior, furniture and lighting designer behind Marie Burgos Design. The award-winning designer draws from her diverse background and interests – having started in business before becoming a Feng Shui expert and designer – to create the kinds of homes and commercial spaces that her clients dream of. I'm so excited to bring you our Q&A and grateful to Marie for taking the time to provide these in-depth answers. If you're interested in living in harmony, then enjoy this Designer Spotlight Q&A with Marie Burgos!

Marie Burgos

Q. What made you want to pursue interior design? And then what pushed you to diversify your brand by creating a furniture and lighting collection?

A. I grew up in Paris, exposed to beautiful architecture and fashion as well as on the colorful island of Martinique where nature and color are

predominant. I am part of of creative family with a mother as a painter, brothers who are executive chef and musicians and a husband photographer. So I was always surrounded by creative people.

I pursued an interior designer career when I became aware of the impact of my direct environment and its impact on my moods, feelings, life and decisions. I was after a balanced and harmonious life and discovered the philosophy of Feng Shui, which placed me on the path to design. I joined the NYU design program and graduated as an interior designer and also as a Feng Shui expert. I since focused on creating interiors that are not only beautiful but also feel right and supportive and harmonious to the people living in them.

While designing interiors, I created custom pieces for my clients. Once the design was published, I started receiving inquiries about some of the pieces on the design and decided to manufacture some of them and a whole line started to come together to create a collection.

Q. What have you learned about the business of home since you started in the industry and where do you think the business of home is going?

A. Home is your space for resourcing yourself and for growing families. So it is not ending anytime soon...

Over the years, I have learned to listen and listen again to my clients to grasp their needs and tastes and connect/bond with them so their home represents them and supports their lifestyle.

It has been my pleasure to hold my clients' hands through renovations as these are always an extraordinary, wonderful change of life. To keep an ongoing communication bond with my clients from abroad for whom I was creating pieds-a-terre and homes away from home.

I feel that the industry is more about personalization of your home to accommodate it to your needs and lifestyle. Every home has to be comfortable, practical, safe, sustainable and beautiful in each of my client's eyes. More people work from home and raise families so they want a home that has a dual function of being a restful space and also a place for work. So it is about creating the perfect layout and designing with your clients' personalities.

Q. What is some of the best advice you've received in establishing your career?

A. Planning before acting is essential. You want to have all plans, drawings, schedules, budgets, etc...organized before starting to implement a project. Laying down the plan of action is essential for a successful project. Communication is key for all parties to work together in harmony and bring a project to a successful accomplishment. Also for your clients to understand and enjoy the process of designing and remodeling their home. Nurturing your relationships is also key, whether it's your clients or your collaborators (contractors, installers, window treatment studio, upholsterer, vendors...). It takes a village to put together a beautiful home.

Photo courtesy of Marie Burgos Design

Q. You draw from a lot of aspects of your life to create your collections and create spaces for your clients, such as your Parisian upbringing, your Martinique heritage, and your expertise in Feng Shui. How do you make all of these sources mesh into one cohesive aesthetic?

A. I feel that I am multifaceted. It just comes naturally as we are all complex beings. Being from a rich background really brings you creativity and ideas and I think that Feng Shui helps me organize all this creativity so the result feels harmonious.

Q. From where else do you draw inspiration? What gets you excited to create?

A. Joy and happiness in general! Great news always give me a boost of energy. Ideas come up also with conversations I have with friends, family, clients, collaborators as we are always trying to bring a solution to an issue or a difficulty. Fashion is also a great inspiration, the way fashion designers

layer fabrics and make it flow.

Q. Where did your interest in Feng Shui come from and how do you make it fit in the context of individual personal design for each of your clients?

A. I originally have a business degree and, before becoming an interior and product designer, I had a whole career in corporate firms managing restaurants and training teams and managers. I did this in several countries (Paris, France, Luxembourg, London, UK, and finally NY, USA). I traveled and worked many hours and learned many business skills, such as planning, organizing, communication skills, budgeting, managing teams, customer service. But none of these skills really let creativity take over.

I fell on a book of Feng Shui called "Move Your Stuff, Change Your Life: How to Use Feng Shui to Get Love, Money, Respect and Happiness" by Karen Rauch Carter. It made me aware of my direct environment and the impact it had on my mood, feelings and how it was shaping my life. I made changes and felt that I needed more and more to tap in my creative side to the point that I could no longer ignore my creativity. I went back to school while working full time and the rest is history.

I use Feng Shui in my life and all my projects. It starts by creating the right layout for a space that will enhance the Chi energy. I use the five natural elements (wood, fire, earth, metal, water) to layer spaces and also work on balancing the two opposite forces of Yin and Yang, such as pairing straight lines with curve pieces, hard surfaces such as wood, glass or stone with plush/soft elements. I also ensure great lighting design is applied to create the right atmosphere depending of the area of the space and time of the day. I also listen to my clients to grasp the energy, the look, the ideal life style they aspire to so I can translate it in their home design.

Lighting by Marie Burgos Design

Q. All of your work is elegant while not shying away from bold choices, whether it's with tile pattern, artwork, paint color or wallpaper. What are your thoughts on color and pattern? Do you have tips on how people can best incorporate color and pattern in their homes?

A. Thank you for the kind words.

I tend to utilize a neutral color base and layer with color or an unexpected element. I believe every home needs to have some fun areas or some elements of surprise. So I would say to create a layout that is open and have a neutral base color palette. Choose an exceptional piece that creates a focal point or a conversational starter because of its shape or its finish. Another way is to integrate a texture or pattern such as a wallpaper, or artwork. Fabrics and or a display on a library of colorful or oddly shaped objects can be a great way to integrate color and patterns.

Q. Artwork in a variety of forms seems to play a large part in your design aesthetic. How do you go about choosing artwork for your clients?

A. With Feng Shui, I discovered that the imagery around you influences your mood, your psyche and defines your thoughts and even your future. So it is important to surround yourself with pieces that you love, that make you feel happy and support what you want to do or your life direction or aspiration. Images around you are a reminder. So I always encourage my clients to choose art that resonates with them. Besides, my mother is a painter. My husband and partner is a photographer and produces fine art photography. So I am myself surrounded with art.

Photo courtesy of Marie Burgos Design

Q. What would you like to see more of in the design world? What would you like to see less of?

A. I would like to see more minorities and designers from the black community chosen for designing celebrities' homes and hospitality. I would like us to have the exposure that we well deserve. I would like to see less of the large retailers using the artists and designers' custom work or iconic

designs and making inexpensive reproductions. This robs the smaller firms and the original artists from the talented work they have created and devalues the art.

Q. How do you think people should approach designing their own homes? What should they do first?

A. It is important to define the style you want to achieve and the functions you want in your home. So research is an important step. Then comes planning the work at hand and budgeting.

Thank you to Marie Burgos for talking to The 256 Project for the Designer Spotlight series! To learn more about Marie, visit her website here and follow her on Instagram here.

For more on the Designer Spotlight series, visit here and see interviews with Beth Diana Smith, Leanne Ford, Lauren Liess and more.