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## AMY LAU

Amy Lau has a talent for having great ideas and taking them to the next level. Around the same time she started the Design Exchange with friends in 2004, she had another inspired idea to create an annual design event and exhibition. "It was insane during that time," she remembers. "It was definitely helpful having the group to talk to."

A year later, Lau co-founded Design Miami, which has become a popular global design forum. Chalk it up to Lau's ability to tap into the zeitgeist of design, a skill that serves the designer in another important role as co-director of the Design Council of the Museum of Arts & Design. "I'm on the exhibition committee, working with 25 luminaries who are the best in art and design," says Lau. "It's really exciting and an honor to foster ideas with them."

It's also an honor her artist grandmother would take pride in. **WHILE GROWING UP IN ARIZONA, LAU SAYS HER INTEREST IN DESIGN WAS AWAKENED AT HER GRANDMOTHER'S TREASURE-FILLED HOME.** "She had collections of everything—she was a mineralogist, an expert in rare cactuses, and also very much into ornithology," she says. "Her work really revolved around creating an environment and that piqued my interest."

After earning her undergraduate degree in art history and marketing, Lau applied that interest, working for an import/export company in Tucson. "I had the rare experience of working all throughout Mexico," she says. "I was brought in to buy retail and wholesale and I also designed lines in tin, ceramic, copper, silver, and wrought iron, collaborating with artisans to make their work more commercially appealing to the American market."

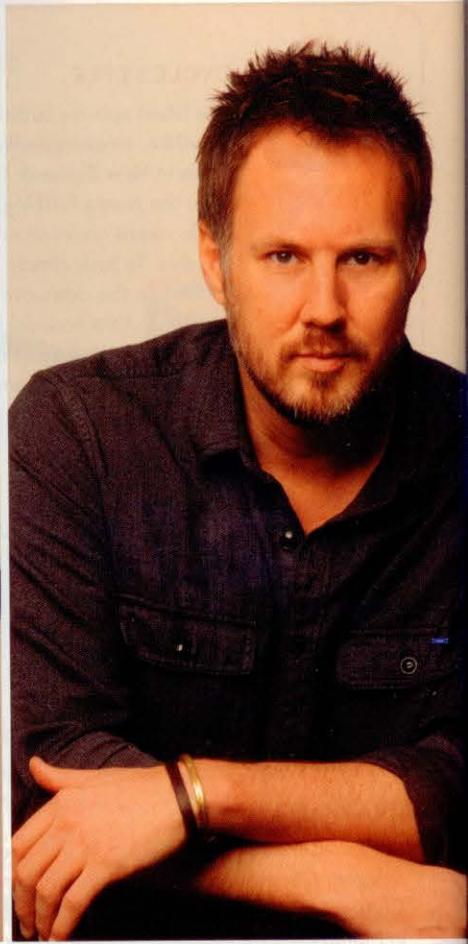
Then it was onto New York, where she was accepted to the prestigious graduate program in fine and decorative arts at Sotheby's. "We studied under major curators and art historians and industry professionals," she says, "which really helped to shape and formulate my eye."

Lau's expertise came in handy as director for Aero Ltd., where she worked with founder Thomas O'Brien. Two years later, she became the design director for the Lin-Weinberg Gallery, and then in 2001 founded her own firm, Amy Lau Design, which has kept her busy ever since.

In addition to her interior projects, Lau recently debuted a fabric line for S. Harris, will launch a wall covering collection for Maya Romanoff this spring, and has plans to create a tile line for Artistic Tile. There is also a television show in the works, and, as always, new ideas are brewing. "I'm thinking about bringing a fashion component into my products," she says. "I love taking design to a higher level, and making it available to people outside the design community."

And if anyone can make great ideas happen, Amy Lau can.

Amy Lau's curatorial expertise and passion for great design translates to beautifully composed interiors. 1. The living room of a Bridgehampton beach house. 2. The living room of a West Chelsea loft. 3. The dining room of the same loft in West Chelsea. 4. A Greenwich Village penthouse. (amylaudesign.com)



Portraits by Andrew French

## G R O U P D Y N A M I C

MEET SOME OF THE MEMBERS OF THE POPULAR INDUSTRY NETWORK, DESIGN EXCHANGE NEW YORK

Before social networking involved tweets and friending, a small group of interior designers had their own idea about connecting with one another. It all started back in 2004, when designers Amy Lau, Brad Ford, and Harry Heissmann attended a *Domino* magazine luncheon. The conversation flowed, great ideas were exchanged, and Lau thought, "Why don't we do this more often?"

"Most of the time you're so busy that you're chained to your office and you don't get to connect with other designers," says Lau. "So we thought, 'We really have to reach out more to one another. Let's have a dinner.'"

That dinner quickly became a regular get-together and grew to include designers Adrienne Neff and Jayne and Joan Michaels, among others. "We started going to a restaurant, and everyone just sat around a large

table to talk about what was new," says Neff. "We had such a good time that we wanted to do it again, and before we knew it the group grew larger and larger."

Wanting to make the most of that momentum, Lau took inspiration from friend and fellow designer Robin Bell, who hosted her own gatherings. "I remember Robin telling me how amazing it was to be able to pick up the phone and ask for support from other designers about anything from who to use as a refinisher to negotiating contracts to dealing with clients," Lau says. "I thought that was great, and we started feeling that we could do that too."

But the group was outgrowing the restaurant scene, not to mention the headache of divvying up the bill at the end of a meal. So meetings were

