



GIVING LIFE TO YOUR HOME

BY DANIELLE RENDA



A breakfast nook designed by Diana Byrne. Photograph by Jane Beiles Photography. Courtesy DB Designs.

Some people are just born with a creative gene. Diana Byrne is one of them. The founder and owner of DB Designs in Rye — an interior design company — spent years working in the publishing industry in fashion and beauty and, in some respects, she still does. She's just transitioned from pages to walls.



Diana Byrne. Photograph by Alix Martinez.

"It's very different," Byrne says of her career history, "and, in some ways, it's similar."

Byrne, who works in residential interiors, has a client base with eclectic taste. Some projects are confined to one-room renovations, while others are whole-house makeovers. A handful of her clients prefer bold décor, with brass and antique accents, while others opt for modern touches. Whatever the request may be, Byrne loves the challenge.

"I love change," she says. "I think that's part of what draws me into doing this. I love changing things around, whether it's chopping off my hair or going into someone's house and creating and rearranging their whole room."

Her personal style is also eclectic, but it's fair to say she gravitates toward classic white walls, lots of natural lighting and a plethora of plush seating. It's a preference that's carried out in her look. On this day, the petite blonde sports metallic touches (moto jacket, nail polish) that offset her natural makeup and bobbed hairstyle.

Byrne tailors her creative process to suit each project. Some clients want to be more involved than others, she says, and everyone has a different vision for his space.

"When I first go into a space, I'll let the client tell me about why they want me there," she says. "What are you looking to do? How do you feel about this room?"

From there, she says, the conversation focuses on the use of the room, along with how much the client is willing to change the existing décor.

"Sometimes there are clear ways to open a space by just taking down walls and getting more windows in," Byrne says. "To me, that's kind of the first step if they're game and if it's relevant. Then, how do they want to use the space; who's going to be in there; and what's going to be happening in there? Then, finding out how to make it comfortable, how to make it unique and kind of finding that balance."

In order to create a space that works, she discourages following trends.

"With your home, you just want to choose carefully with things you'll love for the next five years," she says.

Once Byrne and her clients determine the function of the room, they consider the furnishings. And she has a distinct process for sourcing quality fabrics.

"I literally will put ketchup, red wine and soy sauce on a fabric before putting it on the sofa," says Byrne. "I just did that with a client."

But Byrne wasn't always testing the durability of fabric. Her business — which she founded in 2011 — wasn't even something she anticipated doing. Having moved from Washington, D.C. to New York City to attend college, Byrne began working for a record label and then the publishing industry, where she held various positions at *Vogue*, *Allure* and *Seventeen* magazines. It was in publishing that she began attending photo shoots, mingling with photographers, artists and fashion designers.

After having her first child — she is now the mother of three girls, ages 12, 10 and 8 — she took time off but remained in New York, which, she says, was a constant source of inspiration.

"It just opens up your mind, being in the city, as clichéd as that sounds," she says. "I was starved to be doing something creative."

One of Byrne's friends started building a Hamptons beach house and needed help with the design

process. So, Byrne and her then-partner jumped at the opportunity.

“That’s how it began, and we dove right in.” Since then, she’s teamed up with close friend Lynne Biase, who serves as partner in and business manager of DB Designs. As of late, the company has been finishing the interiors for a home overlooking the water, a project that entailed adding floor-to-ceiling windows to capitalize on the views and classic architecture.

But even though Byrne began her design business just a few years ago, she’s always felt compelled to create.

“I think as a kid I was always a visual person,” she says. “I was always just drawn to fashion and art. I always liked playing around with color in whatever medium was fun for me. I didn’t think I knew it as a kid. My dad is a doctor and my mom is a lawyer. I didn’t know anyone who was an interior designer.”

She hopes to instill this passion in her daughters. “I’m totally trying to hypnotize them so they’ll come work with me one day,” Byrnes says with a laugh. “They’ll go into my office and find product samples and make American Girl doll clothes out of the samples. I like involving them, especially as they get older...But I’ll certainly help them find their own paths.”

For more, visit dbdesigninc.com or call Diana Byrne at 646-246-2617.



A sleek white kitchen design by Byrne. Photograph by Jane Beiles Photography. Courtesy DB Designs.



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