



STYLE PROFILE: INTERIOR DESIGNER ANNE STRICKLAND

Interior designer Anne Strickland, founder of PORT Mfg. & Design, shares home design tips and her style icons in 20 questions with SEEN.

By Rachel Schostak

We caught up with interior designer Anne Strickland at her charming Birmingham home to find out where she finds inspiration and how she turns dream homes into reality.

1. Tell us about yourself: I grew up in Bloomfield Hills and attended Cranbrook Kingswood. From there, I went on to graduate from Michigan State with a bachelor's in interior design. I lived in Chicago after graduation, working for a residential design firm before moving back to Michigan in 2008. I worked for a local firm before starting PORT mfg. & design in 2011. My main goal when starting PORT was to give myself an avenue to curate my ever-evolving dialogue of what design means to me. I love designing interiors, but as in many creative fields, I didn't want to feel creatively cornered into one aspect of design. By starting PORT I wanted to create a hub to give myself the freedom explore and curate my style and viewpoint. Currently, I live in Birmingham with my husband Scott, our two children, Corinne and Webb and our golden retriever Hogan.

2. Can you share a bit about how you got started with interior design? When asked to explore and define a major my freshman year at Michigan State, I realized how spaces and interiors impacted how I lived my life. I am someone who is motivated and inspired by my surroundings, and I decided I wanted to make a career in creating spaces to hopefully do the same for others.

3. Where do you find your inspiration for houses? Do you have a certain style – if so what is it? I am endlessly inspired by travel and how we can experience something in a day and integrate it into our lives. It could be something as charming as an afternoon tea, how a bed is made up or a paint color to use on our walls. I also read dozens of design books every year, follow tons of designers on Instagram and get almost every shelter magazine on the market. We have many outlets to get to know how creative people go about their daily lives. People share so much of their process and what inspires them that I can get almost overwhelmed with excitement when I'm reading books or flipping through feeds. I'm constantly saving or folding the corner of pages that speak to me. It could be a certain cabinet finish or trim detail, but it could also be an image of a fantastic looking party with fabulous food and I'm thinking, "I want to create a space where parties feel like that!"



My personal style is very collected. I love a hunt. I love the thrill of finding a unique piece. I have curated our house to tell the story of our life thus far. I love to live amongst our memories. There are items from travels, paintings I've stalked at auction houses and furniture I've dug out of booths at antique markets. To make the space feel current I neutralize with materials such as linens, velvets, mohair and sisal. I think lighting also plays a huge part in how people react when they walk into our home. Everything is on dimmers and paired with lighting at various heights. It provides an atmosphere to make people feel immediately welcome and at ease.

4. How do you turn your client's dream ideas into reality? My clients have a variety of tastes and styles and, while all very different, I am proud of every design scheme I present. I get excited by the new challenges and possibilities that come with every project, and it's really an evolution of a partnership. Clients tell me their needs, wants and usually share a few images that inspire them. For an initial fee, I will then put together a presentation on furniture plans, elevations drawings, furniture, fabrics, finishes, etc... After having a meeting to review we will edit and tweak until we are at a point where I can write estimates, have them sign off and place orders.



Living room designed by Anne via @portmfg Instagram account.

5. Can you share one of your favorite projects you've worked on? Projects come in all shapes and sizes, but helping a friend with a nursery for twins was an exciting and enjoyable experience.

6. House of your dreams? For sure a historical renovation of some sort. Either an old 1920's Tudor with great bones and quirky details. Or an old farmhouse surrounded by space where I could create outbuildings for various functions. A "party" barn, detached office and a big yard for an ice rink or outdoor movies would be nice.

7. Who inspires you in the business world? Scott's aunt, Susan Lapelle, is a great designer in Atlanta. She has built an awesome business, and I always relish in any wisdom she will impart. From buying trips to introductions to showrooms and resources, she always has an answer for any question. She always has a new, more efficient way to get things done, is a listening ear and continually helps me understand this business. Not to mention, she has fantastic taste.

8. Must read for good inspiration and design tips? I remember the first time I stumbled upon a design blog. It was at my first job in Chicago, and I was trying to find an image for a presentation my boss was about to give to a client. It was a deep dive from there. Every morning I started my day with a cup of coffee and a look at the day's fresh posts. Now, it seems most of the original home bloggers have written books or primarily use Instagram. I have enjoyed following Eddie Ross, Erin Gates, Anna Spiro, Urban Grace Interiors and Lauren Liess. Some of my other favorites include: Roman and Williams, Bobby McAlpine, Thomas O'Brien, Steven Gambrel, Tom Scheerer, Celerie Kemble, Darryl Carter, Windsor Smith, Bunny Williams (my first design book!) and Charlotte Moss, to name a few.



Inside Anne's Birmingham home featuring her portrait wall of old and new photos of her family members.

9. What do you love most about your community? My community is a constant positive reinforcement in my life. They are genuine, sincere and a constant cheer leader. Maybe most importantly, they make me laugh. Sometimes all it takes is a good laugh to see a brighter side of things and bring you out of a frustrating day. On a larger scale, I respect how Detroit has this "pick-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps" work attitude. There's a grittiness to always forging ahead. We must keep on working, keep on moving and keep on exploring. I like the honesty and strong point of view that this community instills in all of us to get up and do the best we can do.

Detroit/Metro Detroit local love list – some of your favs...

10. Must-stop spots when it comes to a quick coffee, lunch and dinner? Commonwealth for breakfast or a quick coffee. Greek Islands for any meal of the day plus a weekly carry-out dinner. Pita Cafe for their chicken schwarma wrap. When it's warm out, we will walk up to Beyond Juice for breakfast

every weekend. Embers and The Gallery (I dream about the pita parm) for any meal with the kids, friends or grandmas. Market North End for drinks and apps with friends. Luxe for a quick week night out burger. Hyde Park lounge seating for a cozy winter night. Dinner and a movie at The Maple Theater is a go-to date night.

11. Where do you like to shop or local designers you support? Woodward & Maple for gifts ranging from hostess gifts to baby gifts to gifts for my parents and friends. EGG for baby gifts. Paper Source for stationary, crafts for my kids or a general pick-me-up. Blue Mercury for all skin care products (I swear by the M-61 product).

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Now on to style...

13. Head-to-toe outfit details of what you are wearing from the photo shoot?



J.Crew ruffle cardigan, Zimmermann organza-paneled printed silk midi skirt, Prada suede peep toe pumps, J.Crew statement earrings, India Hicks double shot bracelet, Shinola the runwell leather strap watch.

14. Three words to describe your style? Classic, collected and feminine (with a modern twist).



Anne with her husband Scott.

15. One item you can't leave home without? My phone. Sounds so cliché, but it's the age we live in!

16. You're never fully dressed without ... a good attitude! I realize some days this can sound challenging, but I think if you wake up and choose to be positive you can take on anything.

17. Your current must-have item? My high waisted Madewell denim!

18. Your most cherished item in your wardrobe/closet? At the end of the day it's all replaceable, but my wedding and engagement ring mean the most to me.



Anne and her husband with their two children.

19. Do you have a style icon? Who? I don't know that I have one style icon. I feel constantly inspired by fashionable ladies and gentlemen.

20. Who or what inspires your style? India Hicks, Aerin Lauder, Lee Radziwill, Bunny Mellon, Lauren Santo Domingo, Kate Middleton, Audrey Hepburn, Katharine Hepburn (I became a super fan at age 8) and many of the classic movies of her era. I love the Bill Cunningham documentary. The way in which he humbly documented fashion throughout the ages is a reminder that taking a risk is something to be celebrated.

21. Favorite quote or words to live by? A friend said to me once, "Don't sweat the small stuff. You'll get too dehydrated," and that's always stuck with me.

For more design inspiration, follow Port Mfg. & Design on Instagram at @portmfg and visit the website portmfg.com.