

# How Kendall Wilkinson Merges Music And Art With Interior Design

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Music Journalist



Divine designer and textile enthusiast, Kendall Wilkinson, has spent the last 25 years of her life dedicating herself to interior design. Her business, Kendall Wilkinson Design, has become a leader in West Coast design and has inspired many. She is more than just a designer, however. Wilkinson is a multi-faceted entrepreneur with a passion for music. Having been a part of several bands since she was in high school, she now only performs in more intimate settings for friends but has no intention of ever giving it up completely.

“While my fabric line was influenced by nature and travel,” she explains, “music is always incorporated into everything I do such as listening to music when I walk or travel.” One of her most iconic designs was creating an homage to Deborah Harry and Blondie at LCDQ in Los Angeles for the George Smith showroom. In this interview, Wilkinson discusses the depth of design, her influences, current trends, and much more. Creating an

aesthetically pleasing space is more than just decorating; it's curating a visual atmosphere that can conduct and evoke emotion.



### *Maison de Luxe Showcase*

#### **What have been the driving forces that led you to a life in interior design?**

**Kendall:** My grandmother was an artist and an antique dealer who dabbled in interior design in Chicago and my mother has been an interior designer for over 50 years in the San Francisco Bay Area. I grew up going to the showrooms and pretending to pick fabrics, pretending to design homes, and learning about the trade from the two strong women in my life, my mother and grandmother. I think it's in my blood!

#### **It's definitely in your blood. Who have been some of the people that influenced and supported you along your career path?**

**Kendall:** Some of the people who have influenced me along the way were of course my mother and grandmother. Lonnie and Dave Hinckley, who were my first employers at a showroom, helped introduce me to antique artifacts. They taught me a lot about scale and eclectic design, mixing modern with antiques. I later studied in Paris, which was a huge influence in my early design. Elsie de Wolfe, Sister Parish, and Barbara Barry, the great female design icons, have been my inspiration over the course of my 25 years in business

#### **What kind of textures and colors are you into right now?**

**Kendall:** I tend to gravitate toward neutrals and shades of blue for my personal use, but I've had such fun designing my indoor/outdoor fabric line with Fabricut that mix sophisticated neutrals with bold brights. We innovated to create a product that had a luxe hand yet was stain resistant, perfect for today's lifestyle with kids, dogs and casual living. Texture, in addition to color, is vitally important. I like the idea of surprise and so will mix textures or colors that typically don't sit together — darkened, patinated metals with spring green tones or texture blends that are unexpected.

#### **How do you incorporate your love of art and music into design?**

**Kendall:** One of the most important roles for designers is to envision how clients will live in their home or office. I look at new projects holistically and imagine how they will interact with their environment and a strong part of

that informing is music. What type of music will be played and how will it influence the design. Music can be different for different rooms and different clients. For a dining room for example, you typically want music to encourage vibrant conversation. For an opera lover, you may want a more classically informed interior or perhaps the opposite!

I always try to ask new clients about the type of music they like, I think it can inform a lot of decisions and provide vital insight. Sometimes, I am really surprised by their musical taste — that is fun and inspires interesting discussions that lead to a more personalized and unique design of their home.



### *Pacific Hillside Home*

Recently, I had an instant room featured in House Beautiful, a conceptual room addressing a low tech gaming response to our high tech world. It was so fun to create this room and along with scents and colors, we were really influenced by a lounge-y soulful musical vibe that we interpreted in a visual format. I love the way it turned out with grassy tones mixed with patinated metals.

Music has always seemed to be at the intersection of arts. Historic examples are Picasso and Cocteau working with Dagliev to create modern interpretations of ballet and other performance work and Kandinsky and Mondrian using music directly as prime influence for their paintings through titles or the syncopation of the work on canvas.

Many artists respond to music as they work. A famous example is Jackson Pollack listening to Dizzy Gillespie and that cadence echoed in his work. Much of today's music videos are highly orchestrated art events.

### **I know it's hard to choose, but what has been one of your favorite design projects?**

**Kendall:** It's an impossible choice! One project that I've been thinking about recently is a seven-year project for an art and furnishings collector in Silicon Valley. It truly was a labor of love and we did some extensive traveling as well as attending numerous art and design fairs to acquire her pieces. It was so successful that we did a follow on a 5,000 square foot guesthouse for them on the property replete with an indoor pool and organic garden. The houses and the items are stunning and a perfect expression of the owner.

**What kind of spaces do you prefer to design or do you have no preference?**

**Kendall:** I love to mix it up. Recent work includes a one bedroom apartment with ingenious storage space and a killer view of the Golden Gate bridge to the residential project I referenced, to offices for the tech and finance sector, to restaurants. Through project variety, it keeps my perspective fresh and engaged.

**Are there any spaces that you hope to design that you have not yet?**

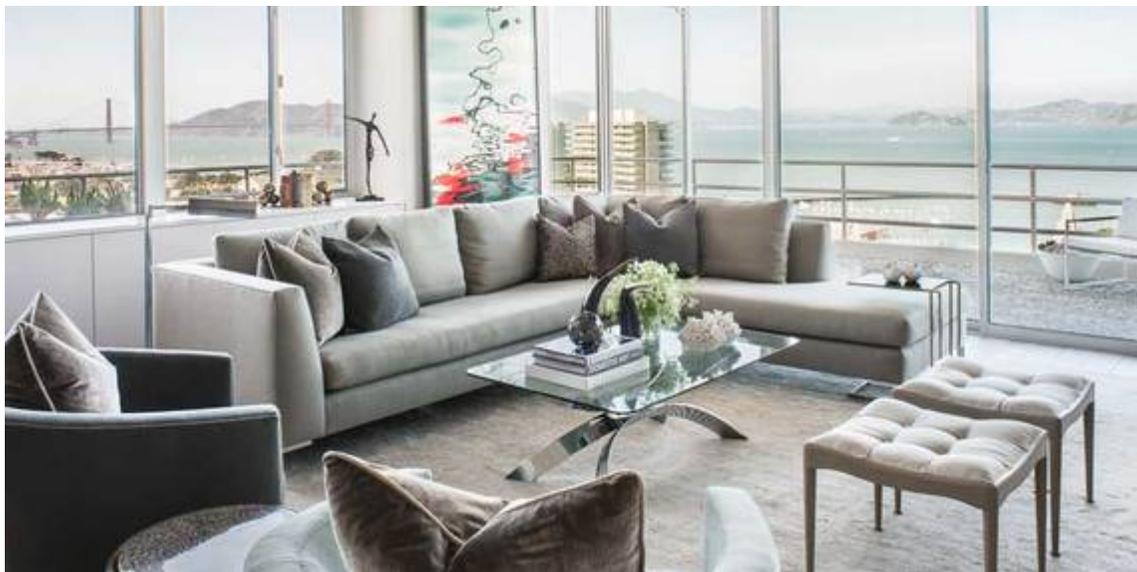
**Kendall:** I've been having great fun with my hospitality work. One restaurant has led to others and I'd love to continue and perhaps expand to hotels and other public spaces such as wineries. To be honest, I love the mix of working with private and public spaces.

**What kind of design trends have you watched come and go?**

**Kendall:** There is currently a move towards 'less is more.' Given our busy lives, people feel less is more. There is a greater focus on things that are relevant and meaningful to the client, less fluff. My overall motto is 'order equals calm' and that has never been truer than it is today. Even in traditional settings, the aesthetic is paired down, especially in pattern and scalability.

**How has the industry changed since you started your career?**

**Kendall:** Communication has definitely evolved. With the internet and sites such as Pinterest and Houzz, it gives people the ability to share imagery and provides greater exposure to design trends, fabrication and inspiration. However, educating clients on quality has become more of a challenge, it's become more important than ever to differentiate lower-end retail vs. custom high-end design, custom upholstery and craftsmanship. That doesn't mean we never use retail, we absolutely do, but mix it in when appropriate with artisanal pieces.



*Bay View Apartment*