

By Design

## JULIE HILLMAN

One of New York's most sought-after interior decorators is driven by the thrill of the hunt

### How did you get into interior design?

It happened organically. I was a fashion designer, then when my kids were young I had a stay-at-home-mom moment and started working on my own home. I realized I have a great sense of proportion and understanding of space and it just started unfolding. I also travel a lot, so my husband and I pick things up from all over the world and out of that came my love of collectible design. The hunt is a big part of it for me.

### What designers, past or present, have had the biggest influence on you?

Eileen Gray was so ahead of her time. I love her form, her finishes, and how she could go from the most beautiful lacquer pieces to raw wood. I still look at her for inspiration when we're building cabinetry. Then later, people that started dealing with collectible design, like Jed Johnson and Jacques Grange.

### How does New York inspire you and what characterizes your work for spaces there?

It has an edge, which is different from any other place, but at the same time a very sophisticated, old-world feeling, much like the great cities in Europe. The energy and culture is very inspiring and anything goes. You can bring anything new in, and it will sit well.

### What brings you to Salon Art + Design every year?

When I walk in with my clients, their mouths drop. Traveling is also a big part of how I find wonderful pieces, and much of that is on my own. But at the fair, my clients can also meet the best dealers in the world and really get the tone of what the galleries represent. Then it can become part of our vocabulary.

### Is there a purchase that you're particularly proud of?

At the 2018 Salon, I was with a European client, for whom I'm doing a New York *pied-à-terre*, and saw the most beautiful things I've ever purchased. One was a Eugène Printz dessert cart at Galerie Chastel Maréchal; a unique piece that the client really wouldn't have understood on paper. At Yves Macaux we saw these wonderful Viennese shoe boxes, in painted

wood, from an old hotel around 1903. If I were to explain, "I want to put shoe boxes in your living room as side tables," that would never have worked, but in that context it did.

### Is there anything that you would really love for your own home?

A piece by Pierre Legrain. It's a really rare, Art Deco work – the majority were unique commissions and mostly go to museums. The forms are African inspired and he used very exotic, expensive materials like ebony and ivory. I once saw a pair of his stools in a famous Jed Johnson home and they've always stayed in my mind.

### What new artists or designers have caught your eye?

Misha Kahn's work is amazing. His shows at Friedman Benda were some of the most fun I've ever had, and I just used his *Rasta Mirror* in a home; it references hair, though it's in gold, formed metal, and also looks like fabric. Nacho Carbonell does gorgeous lighting and had an installation in a palazzo with Carpenters Workshop Gallery at the Venice Biennale last year. He's a genius.

### What's inspiring your work at the moment?

I'm always trying more and more exotic places, but without being able to travel, and spending a lot of time in the countryside, I've been looking at things I've never noticed before. Like nature, for form and lines and colors and textures. Rather than feeling, "I'm not seeing anything," I think I've actually seen things differently.



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Photo: Manolo Yllera

(Left) A Julie Hillman interior featuring Franck Evennou bronze Lotus tables and a Polar Bear armchair and Boule sofa by Jean Royère.  
Photo: Manolo Yllera