

GOLDEN STATE

MADE IN CALIFORNIA 



Category

Homes + Spaces, Makers + Entrepreneurs, Music + Culture

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About

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San Francisco Interior Designer Jeannie Fraise Invites the World to Her Living Spaces

A global effort.

Jeannie Fraise, founder of Lotus Bleu in San Francisco, has spent the better part of 17 years beautifying spaces in the Bay Area and beyond. Known for her harmonious blend of playful color and pattern, the interior designer has recently debuted a market with global wares from her travels. “My latest venture with our market both online and as a showroom in the San Francisco Design District is a culmination of my love of travel and textiles,” says Fraise, who also once owned a design boutique in Hayes Valley. “I curate about three collections a year focused on different regions where I have recently traveled and sourced. We started with Istanbul and have since added collections from Mexico, Ethiopia and Morocco.”



We caught up with the busy globetrotting designer (currently in French Polynesia where she's sheltering-in-place with her family for the next few months), on everything from how she got started to her most memorable design moment.

What was your foray into design?

While I was getting my Ph.D. in art history at Stanford, my husband and I bought a fixer-upper in the Mission district and renovated it top to bottom. I was in the midst of writing my dissertation and working as a research assistant at Stanford's Cantor Arts Center and feeling restless. The house project was super satisfying and I received compliments from friends and colleagues. From my studies in the arts, I had accumulated a vast visual lexicon from my numerous travels and studies abroad, to an understanding of architecture and design. The curator for whom I was working asked me to help her with her house and one thing led to another. I began helping friends, partnered with a colleague who had design experience, and learned by doing.



How was travel influenced your life and career?

Christophe [my husband] and I met as juniors in college on Semester-at-Sea. Christophe is French and was born and raised in Madagascar. Since then we've traveled to more than 60 countries. We adopted our son from Vietnam, and our daughter from China, and have continued our adventures in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Central America. Our travels have been hugely influential to my design. Not only am I constantly exposed to new architecture and design, but I am particularly inspired by color and textiles. I loved the warm reds, yellows and oranges I experienced in Asia and they were central to my aesthetic.



Tell us about your new market.

When I moved our office to the San Francisco Design District, I initially focused solely on our residential interior design projects, but I soon began collecting textiles again. When our kids were past the first years of elementary school, we started longer trips to destinations outside of our more regular itineraries. I was meeting and connecting with artisans abroad [whose products I had carried at my shop] and they introduced me to their favorite sources. I turned my attention to one-of-a-kind pieces, so either vintage textiles or textiles that I collected and brought home to be fabricated into custom pieces. Because I'm visiting the sources in person, I am able to focus on artisan collectives, fair-trade sources and ones that empower women. We currently offer pillows, rugs, blankets, towels and upholstered furniture. We just launched a collection from Morocco consisting of vintage rugs and custom pillows from rugs made out of recycled wool by women artisans in the Atlas Mountains. We have new towels from Ethiopia arriving this month, and in the winter, we will be releasing a collection from South Africa.



What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?

Bringing joy to people's homes. I believe design should be playful and feel good. I have always valued home as our sanctuary and during this pandemic, it's even more true. I want people's homes to really work for them and know that after I walk away, I have created something that they can easily maintain and enjoy for years.



Can you suggest two easy ways to transform a room?

Get organized and make sure everything has a place. Use fun storage bins and baskets that coordinate with your design scheme and select furniture that cleverly maximizes storage.

Update and personalize your space with textiles. Get unique pillows for your sofa or bed in colors and patterns that resonate with you.



What are you working on now?

I'm at a great place in my career where I am able to circle back with past clients, either helping them with a second home or updating their main home to grow with them and their family. This past year, I got to revisit three favorite projects and work on our very own home after 20 years.



What is your most memorable moment as a designer?

At the beginning of my career, I remember my first time going to the Maison & Objet exposition in Paris. I had my shop in Hayes Valley at that time, and I was also starting to design a house in Corsica. It just blew my mind. I had never seen so much great design in one place.