



SILVER LININGS

A SUCCESSFUL JEWELRY DESIGNER RETURNS TO HIS ROOTS CREATING STRIKING INTERIORS

words by **Karina Timmel**

Michael Dawkins was interested in design as far back as he can recall. Now an acclaimed designer with his own interiors firm, Michael Dawkins Home, he started re-upholstering pieces of furniture while in middle school without any formal training.

“I remember getting an old wingback chair, ripping it apart and re-upholstering it in black. I thought it was so cool,” Dawkins says of his first design creation inside his parents’ garage in Grosse Pointe, Mich.

Dawkins studied industrial design and architecture at the College for Creative Studies in Detroit before moving to New York and launching his eponymous design firm.

Then his business took an unexpected turn. “I was just

getting started on client projects, and simultaneously developing sculptural art pieces in silver and bronze that turned into jewelry pieces,” he says. “Barneys picked up the collection, and suddenly my interiors business was usurped by a new career as jewelry designer.”

His Michael Dawkins jewelry collection grew to a global level, selling from North America to Japan, and when QVC approached him for a partnership, he put his interiors company on hold.

When Dawkins does something, however, he always sees it through. In 2010, he decided it was time to return to his roots – interiors – and opened his first Michael Dawkins showroom in the Miami Design District.

“I came down here one winter from New York, got a tan, and saw that there was a missing link with taste levels – everyone was still doing high-gloss white everything down here.”

Dawkins took a more intellectual approach, fusing genres, styles and textures to offer a progressive yet timeless design aesthetic. “Our showroom has since found great success,” he adds.

Calm sanctuary
The ambience in Michael Dawkins’ private residence in Miami is calm and serene in a monochromatic color palette.

So much so that only three years later, he opened his second showroom in New York City's Design District. Both are home to his private label furniture, accessories, art, case goods, carpets, lighting and upholstery, as well as a vintage and outdoors collection.

"Usually showrooms are often very rigid, in one style, and maybe you'll discover a couple of pieces. I like my showrooms to have curated scenes with everything you need – accessories, artwork, furniture – in one place," Dawkins explains of the spaces.

The Miami location has won Best Showroom by the American Society of Interior Designers, and Dawkins is also up for Best Interior Design and Best of Year awards for 2014 (results still pending at press time).

Today, he splits his time between the two locales with private residences in South Beach and Midtown Manhattan. And while the showrooms work hand-in-hand with the design trade, Dawkins also has a private clientele in the fashion and luxury goods worlds.

When asked to describe his design aesthetic, he says: "I think it's modern in the sense that it's minimal and restrained but it's not a cold modern, not slick or icy."

His top tip is to include something "solid and grounded" in each room of

The home front
Designer Michael Dawkins blends contemporary and classic aesthetics into his beautiful home in Miami.



a home. He's particularly fond of his chic Fabianne dining chair as an example.

"This particular chair feels solid all the way to the floor," he says. "I hate a lot of legs, like when you go into a room and all of the furniture has spindly legs and nothing feels grounded. It gives me anxiety and looks messy."

His style is also eclectic, combining pieces from different periods and mixing them. "I don't like bold patterns or colors," he adds. "To me, it's really important that your home environment is a space to feel calm in. I like to feel Zen-ed out when I'm at home. Jarring motion and color make me tense."

The scene in his own Miami residence is serene and calm in a neutral, monochromatic palette. The lines are minimal, and the spaces feel both modern and classic.

An avid art collector, Dawkins' walls are decorated with his personal collection of paintings and photographs

from artists such as Helmut Newton, Herb Ritts, Richard Giglio, John La Huis, and Robert Motherwell, which he finds at Sotheby's and Christie's auctions.

His design services also extend to building homes and creating landscapes. "I take a home project from beginning to end," he says. "I even light the candles and pop the champagne." **OH**

THE DETAILS

For more information on Michael Dawkins Home, visit michaeldawkinshome.com.