

2. ONES TO WATCH
JAKI YERMIAN



Make Way for the Millennial

A young interior designer starts her own company and makes clients for life

BY WENDY MANWARREN GENERES • PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAMANTHA GOH



Jaki Yermian has been planning this photoshoot for weeks—11 to be exact. She invited her British grandparents, who have lived in San Diego for 25 years but have never seen one of their granddaughter's finished projects in person; and three of her friends, all former classmates from Design Institute of San Diego, where she graduated with a degree in interior design in 2016. They were all there for moral support, and her friends came to help zhuzh the space, assist Jaki with her hair and makeup and—of course—take behind-the-scenes photos for Jaki's growing @jydesigninteriors Instagram feed.

To say Jaki was excited would be an understatement, but this photoshoot was a big deal. While this was not her first interior design project (she worked [for other designers] for three years in school), this San Marcos home was her first solo residential project of this magnitude—a 6,500-square-foot, five-bedroom, five-and-a-half-bath new build that she was essentially redoing.

Let's back up a bit. Jaki didn't set out to own her own company, JY Design Interiors, so quickly. It was sort of a happy accident that happened during her last year of school. She bartended weekends in Encinitas and made friends with the customers. One, who worked in construction, asked if Jaki would come look at a commercial project he was working on in San Marcos. It was basically a blank slate. Jaki got the job based on the proposal she submitted, and she picked all the materials, finishes and accessories. It was during this admittedly learn-as-you-go experience that she secured a business license. "I needed a way to invoice and get paid," she laughs.

With that project in her portfolio, Jaki started getting a few residential jobs, mostly to consult on paint colors and style or help select furnishings for single rooms.

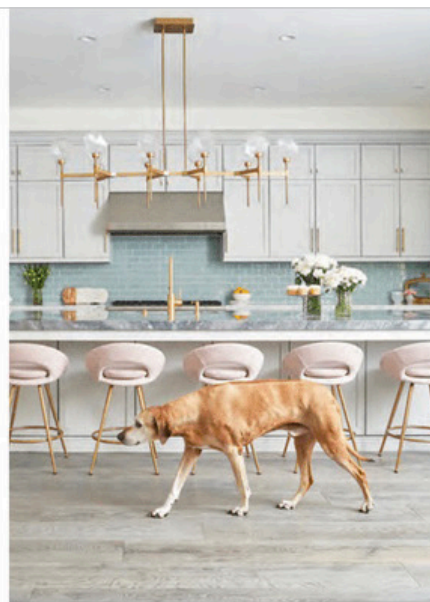
In 2017, she scored this home owned by Jil and Greg Baldi and their best friend Jesse di Franco. Jil, who had never worked with an interior designer before, stumbled upon Jaki's bare-bones site while Googling "interior design Carlsbad."



Above: Designer Jaki Yermian is a big believer in unexpected color. The soft pink she brought in to this San Marcos home works more like a neutral. Top: Jaki was initially brought in to help homeowner Jil Baldi select the gray-toned *Passive* paint from Sherwin-Williams for the cabinets. Facing page: Jaki became friends with her clients and continues to help Jil and Jesse di Franco, who also owns the home, design more rooms.

This space was intended to be a casual eat-in kitchen, but Jaki's plan called for a design with an elevated sophistication throughout the home. To make it a bit more formal, she added curtains, upholstered seating and a modern light fixture.





“This one decision was consuming me; I needed a professional.”

Jil felt overwhelmed. This house wasn't like the trio's other investments (Jil, Greg and Jesse buy and sell investment properties together in their spare time). They didn't just buy this house to make modifications and sell it. They really liked this house and, with the casita in the back, it had plenty of space for them to actually live. They collectively decided to keep this one, reside in it (with the Baldis and their two teenage sons in the main house and Jesse taking the back casita) and really make it something special.

“This house needed a lot of work,” Jil explains. “While it was all new, it had already fallen out of escrow multiple times, the floors weren't finished and all the countertops, cabinets, knobs and fixtures weren't the quality or look we wanted. I made changes in the other properties we owned, but this needed so much more and I felt like I needed help.”



Clockwise from top left: The formal dining room opens to the yard. • Clyde, the Rhodesian ridgeback, moseys across the kitchen. • Jesse works at the kitchen table. • Jil arranges flowers, a hobby of hers.



Above: The pink in the master bedroom is feminine but not too precious. Jaki combined it with lots of metal and modern silhouettes. Facing page, clockwise from top left: Lola Mae, the English bulldog, lounges on the bed. • It was Jaki's rendering (bottom right) of the master bath (top right) that impressed Jil and solidified their designer-client relationship. • The art in the master bedroom is simple so as not to compete with the wallpaper.

Jil had a basic plan. She wanted distressed gray floors and a palette of white, gray, gold and pink, but task number one on her to-do list—trying to select the right shade of gray for the kitchen cabinets—completely stressed her out. She just couldn't make a decision.

"It was a joke how many different samples I'd painted on the cabinets trying to figure out which shade was best," Jil says, holding up a photo with no less than 20 different grays on the cabinets. "This one decision was consuming me; I needed a professional."

Jaki was initially brought in to help Jil pick that paint, but the two clicked. "And she totally got my style," Jil says.

On that first walk through, Jaki asked about future plans to redo spaces. "I encouraged Jil (and Greg and Jesse) to think about changes we could do that would make the house unique—something they'd be excited about because they had this great

new house, even though it wasn't yet exactly what they wanted," Jaki says. "I wanted them to see that we could get it there."

Jaki started with the kitchen paint selection. Jil loved the *Passive Gray* from Sherwin-Williams and entrusted Jaki to take on more. She asked her to come up with a new plan for the master bath that, at the time, had a fabulous soaking tub but no floors, dark brown cabinetry, cheap countertops and teeny sinks.

"What Jaki came up with was much grander than I imagined, but I loved everything about it, and I hired her to help with the other rooms," Jil says of the rendering Jaki created that sold Jil on Jaki's creative talents.

The new plan called for stripping and repainting the cabinets white; replacing the countertops with marble; adding a decorative herringbone inlay pattern in the middle of the tiled floor and then repeating that design in the shower; using stacked

stone on the walls; swapping out the sinks, hardware, fixtures and lighting; and changing the shower door.

Because the home was new, the redo didn't include moving walls or messing with the footprint at all; changes were purely cosmetic.

Besides the gray-painted cabinets in the kitchen, Jaki put in new countertops, backsplash, hardware, faucets and sinks—in both the main kitchen and the adjoining butler's pantry. She had the linear brass light fixture over the island custom made with hand-blown, intentionally misshapen glass orbs, and Jaki added a touch of millennial pink that Jil wanted with low-backed barstools.

Jil then gave Jaki the reigns to complete the master bedroom. Jaki wallpapered the wall behind the bed in marbled shades of pink and gray; added velvet furnishings in barely-there blushes and grays; and brought in more gold with shelving,



Millennial Pink is Here to Stay

It's not a fleeting trend or an empowering feminist statement. Soft blush tones are the new neutrals that work for all spaces because variations of the hue offer a muted sophistication that's not the typical cream, gray or greige. Here are a few ways to make the soft pastel an instant classic in your decor.

PAIR IT with gold or brass. Pink helps soften the metallic, while gold empowers blush.

PICK time-honored designs with clean lines in the rose-y tones.

BRING the candy color in with artwork. Look for modern works or photographic prints that play with pink in a grown-up way.

ADD a little luxe with velvet or flokati pillows, throws or other linens in the pretty pastel.



“What Jaki came up with was much grander than I imagined.”





The impressive soaking tub was already here (minus the new faucet) so Jaki planned her all-white design around it.



“I want to help them chip away at their wishlist little by little...”

hardware and accessories. From there, Jaki took on both dining rooms and is now in the process of completing the home office and lighting and furnishing selections for other rooms.

Her little website—and digital portfolio—has grown with this multiroomed design. And now Jaki’s got several jobs in the works—from paint consultations to remodels and furniture selections to staging.

“I’m still learning to run a business,” she admits. “I’m starting to market myself, but it’s not about getting lots of business transactions. I’m looking for long-term clients that I have rapport with, like Jil. I want to help them chip away at their wishlist little by little to help them create their dream homes.”

But Jaki’s already adding more to her evolving resume. She’s opening an online retail shop of “wow” pieces soon. And today with her first photoshoot complete and lots of social-feed content collected from her entourage to help grow her business and spread the word that she’s new and talented, Jaki also checks something off her entrepreneur to-do list: Get published. ❖



Clockwise from top left: The only modification Jil made to Jaki’s original rendering of the master bath was making the inlay in the middle a bit smaller to be more cost effective. • The pink-tinted barstools are a new—and very welcome—addition. The old ones didn’t have backs. These encourage gathering and lingering, Jaki notes. • What better way to celebrate the wrap of a photoshoot than with a glass of bubbly? • Jaki loves a good vignette. Here, she styled the etagere in the master bedroom with decorative objects, books, candles and a few fresh blooms.