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MAY/JUNE 2016

IMPASSIONED DESIGNER

LUIGI/IRAUZQUI



BY ROBYN FLANS PHOTOGRAPHY BY BENNY HADDAD

If it can be styled, **LUIGI IRAUZQUI** is doing it. He's styling homes, clothes, film sets, parties, furniture, accessories, vacations. If it exists, he is inspired to design with an abundance of energy. The world contains limitless possibilities.

His dreams of designing weren't realized until he broke free of the bonds of his father's career expectations, though, while growing up in South America and Europe. While his mother was creative and designed shoes, Irauzqui allowed his banker/architect father to choose his direction.

"He gave me an option. He said, 'You are either a doctor or a lawyer or come work for me in South America.'"

Irauzqui went into law for three years and then transferred into economics in London.

He was plucked to be a model, while walking down a Paris street, throwing him into an entirely new world.

"At the end of the day, if you love art, it will find a way to find you," Irauzqui says. ■

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LUIGI IRAUZQUI

Twenty-two years ago he came to Los Angeles and first worked at an advertising agency. Then he got in on the ground floor of the home flipping game.

"That is what prompted me into going into design," Irauzqui says. "I would design my own homes. I would completely gut them, put them on the market and every time I would sell the house, I would get five or six clients."

At the same time, he was designing sets and film premieres where he was meeting celebrities. Drew Barrymore was the first celebrity who hired Irauzqui's company at the time to design her premiere for "Never Been Kissed." They went on to design the event for "Donnie Darko," which she also produced, followed by the "Ocean's Eleven" premiere.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LUIGI IRAUZQUI



After that company disbanded, Irauzqui formed Casavecchia Design Group in 1997, which later transitioned into the current Casavecchia Design Concepts. He was working on a home in Beechwood Canyon one day when Ben Stiller happened to walk in and admire the library he had designed. Word of mouth brought him to the attention of such actors as Reese Witherspoon and Christina Ricci. He also designed the entire last season of "The Hills."

Irauzqui says his goal is to turn blank spaces into amazing spaces.

"At the end of the day, my passion has been to conceptualize a room, keep an open mind and always try new things," he

explains. "Because my orientation hasn't come from formal training, I'm always relying on my sense of aesthetics and my curiosity for color."

He says his Peruvian roots often influence his choices in color. He has a line of cushions coming out soon in reds and pinks and the colors with which he was raised.

Color may come in the form of an accent - "I love putting a dark, grey hallway with a Moroccan lamp with color in it, in the middle," he says.

He likes using art and mixing it up - traditional, sketches, Dali, antiques and whatever fits the space.

"Eclectic is the word I use to describe

my interior design concept," he says. "Houses do not have to be boring. I don't want a house to be so sterile that you can't live in it. At the same time, it has to be luxurious, have textures and colors, but be livable and practical. It has to be inviting and intimate. Most important, it has to reflect the client's personality, not mine."

He specializes in outdoor/indoor spaces because, he says, that's what Southern California is all about.

"We are privileged and blessed to live in a place like this where you can open your window and have bougainvillea right over your window and the pool outside. I live in a house surrounded by gardens. Every window is open all the time. I love listening to nature. I love that a squirrel runs by."

"I pay a lot of attention to landscaping because that's what brings the outdoors in," he says. "The fact that you can have this weather is wonderful for designers. The sun is an oasis for designers - from San Diego to Santa Barbara to Ojai. There is something so distinctive about the landscape and trees. You don't have that on the East Coast where everything has to be cozier when I decorate. We are so blessed here."

For Irauzqui the sky's the limit. He's developing a line of cufflinks, a line of cashmere and llama travel blankets and candles, as well as a line of flaxware and glassware with his husband. On his list of to-do's is designing a hotel - there have been offers, but not yet the perfect one.

In development is a lifestyle show called "The Style Hunter" where he and his team travel the world to find the perfect piece to finish off a project.

Or hunting for a fashion accessory or for the best, not well known destination," Irauzqui says. "It's traveling abroad to find the best of."

As international style editor at Harper's Bazaar Interiors since 2013, traveling extensively helped open his eyes to the big world.

He explains how that translates into lifestyle design.

"It's not anymore just about where you live or how you live, it's where you dine, where you vacation, what you drink, what cigars you smoke," Irauzqui explains.

"The definition of style has become much broader."

He has redefined the term "design" to include everything from a client's travel wardrobe, to travel accessories and their dining experience.

"Design is limitless," Irauzqui says. ♦