

Keep it simple: Kenneth Brown designs

by Maggie_Reed

Designer Kenneth Brown is as down-to-earth, friendly, inviting and comfortable as his designs. He isn't into patterns in his home; he wants to get inside your head, and everything he comes up with has to pass the "mom test."

KENNETH BROWN - Kenneth Brown is as down-to-earth as his designs. CNS Photo courtesy of Kenneth Brown Design. SIZE SHOULDN'T MATTER - Kenneth Brown believes that small rooms are equally as important as larger rooms when it comes to design. CNS Photo courtesy of Kenneth Brown Design. WARM INDEED - The look of Kenneth Brown's designs has been described as 'Warm Modern,' as shown here. CNS Photo courtesy of Kenneth Brown Design. "I need to know she can get it on her way home from work while she's getting dinner for my dad and be able to afford it in her budget," Brown said.

Brown gets that common sense from being a "simple kid from Louisiana."

Family is important to Brown and with his designs and expertise, he wants to become a part of his client's families as well.

"I want to come to your barbecue and not hear decorating horror stories," the Baton Rouge, La., native said. "I always see the homeowner in the picture."

Brown wants to work with the family, with a budget and with a realistic timeline.

"The first step is that I have to get into your head. You need to tell me every secret you have. Bad information equals bad design. Honesty is always best," the 35-year-old said.

Being honest about budgets is also important. "Every budget deserves a good design. You have to be smart about shopping and create a plan within your budget," said Brown.

His TV show "reDesign" reinforces these homespun ideas. Customers must pay for their redesigns.

"If the network is paying for it, what's the challenge? We live in the real world."

And his episodes don't just appear overnight. They too, are set in a realistic time frame.

It takes about a year to make one complete episode: four to five months spent on design and construction, and six to seven months in post-production.

Brown never had his sites set on TV. When first approached, he thought, "No! I don't want to be one of those design shows. I want to use the talents and skills I went to school for."

Brown graduated from Louisiana State University with a degree in interior design. He also studied industrial and interior design for a term at Manchester Metropolitan University in Manchester, England.

Still, when he was looking for a house, he was approached by HGTV's House Hunters and afterward was offered guest spots on HGTV's Designer's Challenge, which he accepted. There was a lot of positive feedback from viewers and thus was born "reDesign," which began development four years ago and hit the airwaves two years ago.

Now a part of the network, there were other aspects of TV he didn't foresee.

"I love interior design. I didn't know about TV. I was focused on interior design. No one sends you to TV school," he said.

He has learned to adapt - even down to his Beach Boy blond hair.

"I get to the point where I really want to go out and get my hair cut and I can't. It has to be the same length and the same color for an entire season," he said of the time spent shooting a single episode for months and months.

"My mom once mailed me a \$10 bill and wrote 'Go get your hair cut, son.' She doesn't realize this is L.A. and that may cover valet parking here."

A new penthouse in the Los Angeles area and a mid-century modern home in Palm Springs, Calif., is where he literally puts his feet - and a few paws - up.

"I don't have any pattern; all the fabrics are different textures from linens and wools to mohairs and silk. My home is monochromatic. It is beautiful and it's incredibly well done and I'm proud of it, but it's comfortable and inviting. Even the dogs are all over the furniture."

Those dogs being Oliver and Benson, miniature dachshunds.

Part of Brown's favorite relaxing rituals combine both the dogs and his favorite piece of furniture. The piece is his Holly Hunt sofa and every Sunday he "can't live without my nap with Oliver and Benson right next to me on the sofa. That is the greatest."

And on the decorating scene, what is the greatest of rooms? "The family/living room. There everyone has a say," he said.

The most difficult? "The trickiest is the master bedroom," said Brown. "Couples disagree and I have to be a psychologist at times. The man wants a large TV, a fridge and a recliner in front of the TV - if there's room.

"The woman wants no TV and lots of feminine stuff like pillows and it drives the hubby crazy! What do you do with them? Throw them on the floor, go to sleep and trip on them on your way to the bathroom?"

"I tell them to talk it out and get back to me in the morning," Brown said.

Many of Brown's designs come from his time in England. "Part of being a good designer is knowing what makes something work, and I learned that in England."

Today he also finds inspiration for his designs in nature. "I love snorkeling and diving. I can find designs for the rest of my life from what I see underwater. That is so inspiring to me. And, I once pulled an entire color palette from the bark of a Sycamore tree."

"reDesign" can be seen Saturdays at 4:30 p.m. (ET) on HGTV. For more on Kenneth Brown, his show and his product line, visit www.kennethbrowndesign.com and www.hgtv.com.

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A few of his favorite things

Here are a few of Kenneth Brown's favorite things:

Color: Blue

Food: Pizza

Drink: Green tea

Vacation spot: Palm Springs, Calif.

TV show: "Heroes"

Music: Classic rock and roll

Reading: History and mysteries

Hobby: Snorkeling and diving

Newspaper section: Real estate

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