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ART · BUSINESS · CRAFTSMANSHIP · CULTURE

featuring: **ANDY WARHOL MUSEUM**

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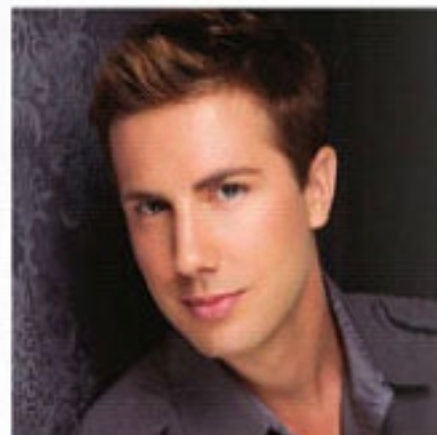
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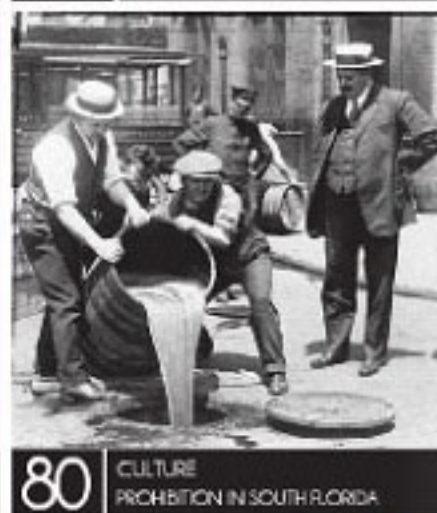
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CHARLES NEAL

modern baroque master

Interviewed by Natalie Kuhn

Interior Designer Charles Neal is emerging at the top of his game. With numerous celebrity clients, guest appearances on HGTV & Bravo, his own reality show coming soon from A&E, plus a furniture line in development, Neal is set to take the USA by storm with his own blend of Baroque Modern designs and Southern charm.

Explain your stylistic motto, "Baroque Modern," in a bit more detail for us!

I use this phrase a lot. Baroque Modern is a blend: classic values with modern lines and the right balance between glam and comfort.

Since you have an interest in historic aesthetics, are there any particular cities or other eras that inspire you?

I do love Art Deco, so I like Miami and the areas and designs that exist there. I'm continually inspired by that style and era. I love the Old World feel of Paris. The Baroque obviously is a theme I always go back to, and then the Modern era. My style deals with living from one extreme to another and finding harmony amidst it.

Tell us about your typical clientele. Who would be your dream client?

I usually work with clients between 35-55 who are ready to design their homes, but may have never done it before or had the funds. It's a new adventure for them, and they want their home to look beautiful and opulent, but not like their parent's or grandparent's home.

My ideal client would be someone who gives me free reign and multiple homes to create different themes. Obviously as a designer, we have our ideas but we're held back or limited by budgets, lifestyles and different variables.

You've designed homes for a long list of celebrities. How is it designing for such high profile clients?

Working with celebrities is exciting and brings a new thrill to creating. Often the ones I've worked with are artists themselves, so there's an appreciation for the art of design. On the other hand, celebrities are very demanding and rarely tell no, so when there's a time restraint on custom design pieces that I can't control, they don't want to hear it. True

TRUE BEAUTY CANNOT BE RUSHED.

beauty takes time, and there are certain things that cannot be rushed. It always works out in the end, and when they see the moment I've created to their wealth, they can be reminded everyday of their accomplishments when they come home.

You have been featured frequently on reality TV shows that center around design. How was it designing in front of the camera?

I love being on camera, and I've done a number of design shows with HGTV as well as reality shows where I'm featured as a designer, such as Kim Zolciak's spinoff from *The Real*

Housewives of Atlanta. I'm designing her new house and filming with Bravo for that. These projects have been a lot more stressful, and it's not reality either in so many ways.

You are currently filming your own reality show. How is that going?

I can't say too much at this point, but filming my own reality show has been so much more exciting than working on someone else's show! It's being produced by A&E, with a *Designing Women* meets *Modern Family* approach.

Do you have any upcoming projects that you are particularly excited about?

I have a furniture line that I'm developing which will really help relay the Charles Neal design aesthetic, because I end up making custom design furniture for almost every project. With my own line, it will be much easier to create my vision, and of course my own TV show will help propel that.

What was your most valuable mistake in life?

Not dreaming big enough. When I was younger, I don't think I reached far enough with my goals and dreams. I was perhaps too realistic and focused mainly on day-to-day survival. Regardless, I've had a long journey in my career overseeing many businesses and Charles Neal Interiors is actually only my latest company. •

