



Q & A

Steve Hermann, STEVE HERMANN DESIGN

A former presidential hopeful (when he was a child), Steve Hermann has since directed his considerable energy and talent to the business of custom home design and architecture in the Hollywood Hills in California and beyond—and with great success. His star-studded list of clients includes such celebrities as Christina Aguilera, Courtney Cox, Jennifer Lopez, Ellen DeGeneres, the Olson twins and Frankie Muniz, of Malcolm in the Middle fame. Because Hermann does not “design by committee,” the waiting list for his homes is long, and his favorite client is, of course, someone who appreciates and purchases his work. Currently, one of his projects holds the distinction of being sold for the highest price per sq. ft. in the history of Los Angeles, an achievement of which Hermann is very proud: “It feels good to know that someone loved that house as much as I did.” Hermann’s designs have appeared in numerous publications, as well as on E! Entertainment Network and ABC’s Beautiful Homes and Great Estates.

What moment in your life inspired you to get into the business?

I hated remodeling low-end houses and decided it would be more fun to do high-end homes in the Hollywood Hills. I took a leap of faith that I could do it and eventually I was able to.

Who do you consider to be the most inspirational architects?

Mies van der Rohe. There will never be another one like him. John Lautner for being incredibly innovative and emotional. And Pierre Koenig for his amazing steel structures.

Are there any examples of architecture that motivate you to design?

I am more inspired by what architects were doing in the 1950s and '60s than by what I see today. Some of these structures were simply sublime.

What “words of wisdom” can/do you share with others?

Live a life that inspires you. Take a chance on your dreams. We all live lives that we have designed for ourselves. My favorite quote says it all: “Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.”

Do you have any professional pet peeves?

I am often knocked off. Part of the business is gathering ideas from multiple sources, and I’m OK with that. However, when designers in my same neighborhood steal a dozen of my ideas and use them in a home a block away and pass them off as theirs, it is a little disappointing.

People would be surprised to find out that you...?

Never had one day of training in architecture, yet I design houses from the ground up. I draft the floor plans, the elevations and the framing plans. I supervise the construction and do all of the interior design. I’m old school, baby!

What do you like to do in your spare time when not designing?

I am a car nut. I love the shape of vintage European sports cars. They are very emotional in a way that new models simply are not.

What’s the one thing you hope to accomplish in your lifetime that you haven’t yet?

I want to build a masterpiece that becomes one of architecture’s defining structures. It’s a lofty goal, but I am hopeful.

What is your favorite product?

Glass. Nothing moves people as much as large expanses of glass.

Tell us about your favorite/ideal supplier?

Poliform for kitchens and bathrooms. Agapé and Antonio Lupi for bathrooms. Tre-piu and Rimadesio for doors.

If you could change one thing about your last project, what would it be?

That I am not living in it.

What is your greatest strength as a designer?

A clear mind. A clear vision. I don’t like clutter. My homes have a strong viewpoint from start to finish.

What is your most annoying weakness as a designer?

Weakness???

Do you have a signature style? Personal design philosophy?

Look at each room as if it were a photograph. Does it move you? If it doesn’t, then you didn’t do your job right. ■

—Alice Liao

For more of this interview, go to www.kbbonline.com/Hermann.