



## ORNAMENT + CHARM

### RISING STAR NOZ NOZAWA'S EXUBERANTLY ELEGANT INTERIORS

BY ALISA CARROLL

Above image: Designer Noz Nozawa at home in San Francisco with dear companion Vivienne. Photo by Alanna Hale.

When first entering a Noz Nozawa interior, it's visual fields of brilliant pattern, color, and objects that first catch the eye. Upon closer examination, the imagery reveals itself to be deeply symbolic: constellations, jewels, serpents—the motifs in each space are the result of dedicated research, careful attention to clients' intentions, and, of course, an artful eye. It is this meaningful attention to both the micro- and macro-cosmic that has made Nozawa one of San Francisco's leading next generation designers. In addition to debuting superb new spaces for jewelers Fiat Lux and Harwell Godfrey this year, she participated in the 2022 Kips Bay Palm Beach showhouse, and her firm has numerous projects underway, including residences in San Francisco and one in New York (for another jewelry icon). As she shares, though her joyfully kaleidoscopic spaces have garnered attention thus far, there is much more below the surface.

You designed one of my favorite spaces, the new Fillmore boutique for beloved jeweler Fiat Lux. Would you share what inspired that wondrous interior?

Owner Marie McCarthy's vision of the Fillmore Street Fiat Lux being the fancy, exuberant auntie of the Mission Street store really got to me. She wanted a joyful, colorful, welcoming space that danced on the edges of maximalism. I thought immediately of Voutsas's Menagerie wallpaper, because I love the vivid cobalt branches and all the fauna in the pattern—Fiat Lux carries a lot of figural animal jewelry. From there, I went through at least 50 explorations of what trim colors and jewelry-case colors should coordinate, and then had what I thought was an instant-rejection idea to take this very lovely wallpaper and “wreck” it by pouring gold resin down several panels with decorative painter Caroline Lizarraga. Of course I should have known, Marie was into it!

I was also very inspired to create a space that jewelry lovers and the jewelry curious would feel excited to walk into. I'm a jewelry lover myself, and frankly, it's often an intimidating experience to walk into a jewelry store. All the merchandise is behind locked cases, usually you have to request pricing, and the store design upholds the intimidation factor. I wanted to bring to life Marie's vision of a welcoming space, and allow customers to have almost an independent intimacy with the jewelry, to feel free to pause at cases and observe without feeling like they shouldn't be in there unless they are already customers or about to buy something.

And then, in the transition space between the piercing salons in the rear and the store in the front, we wanted a more serene area where you could admire your new piercings in the mirror, so we simply painted the walls peach, and then not so simply painted “portraits” of jewelry sold in the store. It makes the transition space almost spiritual.



The atmospheric interiors of the new Harwell Godfrey atelier. (L to R) Decorative artist Caroline Lizarraga, Lauren Harwell Godfrey, and Nozawa. The jeweler with a selection of her talismanic designs. The celestial wall treatment. Photos by Bess Friday.

And Caroline Lizarraga did the decorative painting for Harwell Godfrey’s space too.

Caroline is the reason Lauren and I synced up. So there was an exchange of talent and energy and collaboration that was happening in both spaces. In the Harwell Godfrey studio, the decorative art on the walls and ceiling were an idea I conceived of as being 100 percent brought to life by Caroline.

Tell us about how you channeled the cosmic symbolism of Harwell Godfrey’s pieces into her studio.

Many of Lauren’s designs are inspired by astrological symbolism. She’d also shared with me that she loves and collects art and textiles from West Africa, and we planned to bring a lot of her personal collection into the studio.

In conceiving the design, I knew I wanted to create a pastel nebula on the walls and ceilings. And then I wanted to find a celestial body that was visible across the African diaspora, ideally one that was seen as a feminine body, and to incorporate that into the lighting. I learned about the Seven Sisters constellation, which you can see from West Africa to the Arabian Peninsula, and used Moroccan-star-inspired flush-mount ceiling lights in a configuration that alludes to the Seven Sisters.

Turning to another project, earlier this year you were invited to do the Kips Bay Palm Beach showhouse.

That was an incredible experience. I consider it one of the peak opportunities of my career, certainly. And I’m thrilled to be a part of the Kips Bay design community now. I felt really excited and proud of all of the partnerships we were able to showcase with the vendors, the creators and talents we got to work with, and the unexpected relationships with people in the house.

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Nozawa’s space at the 2022 Kips Bay Decorator Show House in Palm Beach, “No Bad Mondays.” The vivacious sitting room features Benjamin Moore’s “Hidden Sanctuary,” drapes in fabric by Sasha Bikoff for Fabricut and shades by The Shade Store through Kravet. The sofa is wrapped in a Soane Britain textile. Photo by Christopher Stark.

Tell us a bit about your design of the space.

I was assigned a room that was 12 by 12—that’s a very San Francisco–size room. The whole house was actually a very human scale, and I loved that most of us created spaces that felt inspired and exciting, but also very livable. Also, so many designers, myself included, played with the ceiling. I had this thought that maybe all of us these past two pandemic years have flopped onto our sofas and beds and stared up at the ceiling while stuck at home, wishing we had something better to look at up there!

In my space, I wanted to play with lavender—a pastel I love and think is an iconic part of the Palm Beach aesthetic—and to pair it with unusual patterning and complementary colors. The Soane Britain tomato red and olive jacquard on the sofa became the first textile and colors I chose to go with the lavender, and then I used our space’s design as an opportunity to showcase what we love doing: combining hand-painted, organic motifs with vintage and antique pieces—and layering!

A boutique commercial space is a coveted commission—it has such visibility and can garner a lot of attention for the designer. Tell us a bit about your experience of having this practice early in your career.

The first opportunity I had was with Avery on Fillmore. That was my first restaurant, which ultimately led me to designing Hilda and Jesse, a new restaurant in North Beach, late last year. The clients that I usually say yes to with commercial opportunities are often hiring me to design their first space, their business’s first location. They are always independent small-business owners investing in a space that represents everything they want to manifest in their careers. And I relate to that so deeply as a business owner.

What I love about designing restaurants and stores is that, at the close of work, I get to invite people into them. I get the gift of being able to observe others enjoying a space I helped bring to life, and I get to be proud of the public experiencing what we do.

Every time I go to Hilda and Jesse for brunch, or every time I’m in Fiat Lux, just shopping quietly, I often stand and watch people take selfies or run their hands across things, and that’s just so rewarding. But really, it’s about the client, and what I’ve principally done is supported someone’s business and created a space for them to succeed.



For the 2020 *House Beautiful* Whole Home Concept House, Nozawa conjured a bold and artful lounge, designing a custom fireplace with eight different tiles, and wrapping the room in [Phillip Jeffries](#) wallcovering. Photo by David Patterson.

What's next for you?

I'm really excited to have the opportunity soon to release a couple of the projects we'd been waiting through the pandemic to photograph. One is our Japanese-California Modern project. We invested so much research and care and thoughtfulness into how to translate a traditional Japanese materials palette into an interior renovation where much of the existing architecture is steel and glass. We also wanted to do it sustainably, so we considered how to use local materials in a way that feels authentic to Japanese design. I learned so much while selecting the wood species and the exact veneer bundles. A lot of work went into this project, and I'm excited to share a totally different arena of what we design.

Of course, I'm thrilled and flattered that people connect to the color and the maximalist nature of so much of what we're known for so far. But that's not the complete story of what we do. When it comes to interiors, I'm excited to keep people guessing. [H](#)