



Designer Crush: Lisa McDennon

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Inspired by California's region's beauty, history, and culture, [Lisa McDennon](#) founded her Laguna Beach-based interiors firm, Lisa McDennon Design, in 2000. McDennon calls upon degrees in fine art and interior design to create modern residential and commercial interiors, and brings a deep knowledge of art and architecture to all her work. Nuance, McDennon's home and lifestyle boutique in Laguna Beach, showcases her modern style with custom furniture, lighting, and linens and The Lisa McDennon Collection for Hinkley lighting debuted January 2017. Learn more in our Q+A below.



How did you get your start in design?

I first was interested in architectural design from taking some design classes as part of my undergraduate degree, and decided to work for an architect while finishing college. The architectural firm taught me all the basics — drafting, reading plans, building models, creating schedules, etc. Soon, they had me choosing materials, selecting finishes and detailing interior specifications for their interiors — and that is how I discovered the world of interior design.



What made you decide to launch your own firm and what was the journey to get to that point?

It was never my goal initially to launch my own design firm, and it all happened fairly quickly once I made the decision to go out on my own. But before I could even imagine doing that, it took two bachelor degrees, (a bachelor's degree in Fine Art, and then a second bachelor's degree in interior design), and 8 years of work in the field working for the architect and then a few interior design firms. After graduating from design school, and with several years of design experience under my belt I was looking to take the next step in my career to find a more senior design position and at the time my job search turned up with very little opportunity, so my husband and family suggested that I try going out on my own. With a lot of support and encouragement from them, I decided to quit my job and start my own firm. Within a week I landed my first project – designing a private resort in Fiji!



What are some of the unique challenges of residential vs. commercial projects and how are they uniquely rewarding?

I find that residential projects are more emotionally driven and are very relationship based, which I tend to be drawn to with design. I like working on both residential and commercial projects, so it's fun to mix things up and be able to address different goals and create design solutions for both types of projects. In commercial design, the work tends to be on a faster time-table and the decision-making for details is determined by a whole different set of parameters. I love the ability to help commercial clients reflect their company branding within the interior spaces and take their businesses to the next level. For residential projects, it really is a deeper relationship understanding not only their style, but also their lifestyles and working to improve their daily lives. The greatest compliment is when a client refers me to a friend or family member, or when they call me back for new projects. In the past 4 months I have had 5 former clients return for new work!



Tell us about a particularly memorable project and describe what made it so special/rewarding/challenging.

Hinkley Lighting Showroom. I had originally turned it down as I was afraid I would not be able to succeed by meeting the deadline, and the scale of the project was quite large. With some coaxing, I changed my mind and submitted my proposal — and was awarded the contract. I am very proud of the work we did, and it was a wonderful collaboration with the owners, design team, construction co and my firm. Everyone pulled together beautifully — we had three months to completely design and rebuild and furnish 17000 sq feet of showroom space. The result of the redesigned showroom was a huge success for Hinkley, and myself. It was at the grand opening of the showroom that I pulled the owner aside and asked him if I could someday design lighting for him. It was a pivotal point in my career.

Who are some of your biggest professional role models and why?

I really respect Michael Berman. He is talented, kind, and giving. I have always loved his interiors and his product designs and recently have had the opportunity to get to know him on a more personal level. Michael is a great role model for our industry. I also really appreciate the work of Elizabeth Metcalf, and Suzanne Kassler.



A chandelier from McDennon's collection with Hinkley

Lightning round!

Most quotable movie?

The Princess Bride.

Current celebrity

crush?The new

Superman. **Favorite**

pizza topping?

Pepperoni.

First concert?

Inxs.