

Designer Friday: An Aspire Exclusive Interview With Sarah Jefferys

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Raised between New York City and London, Sarah Jefferys has always had an interest in design. Earning a BA in Architectural Studies and History of Art from Tufts University, and a Masters of Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania, Sarah went on to work for many top architectural firms across the world. In 2001 Sarah opened up her own eponymous firm, [Sarah Jefferys Design](#). Sarah has received a number of awards and accolades throughout her career, including the Van Allen Fellowship, Rethinking the Future Private Residence Award, and a NYCxDESIGN finalist. Learn more about this impressive designer in this week's Designer Friday.



Andrew Joseph: You're the newest Crayola color. What color are you and why?

Sarah Jefferys: Sunburst Orange! Orange is my signature color. I try to work orange into each of my projects if I can. Orange is cheerful, bright, playful, and happy. Even if it is the smallest of details, orange brings a fun, cheery pop.

AJ: Describe your design style as if you were explaining it to someone who cannot see.

SJ: We design modern, sleek, unique architecture and interiors. We love to design open plans so people can freely move through and inhabit the spaces. Each project is drenched in natural light from oversized windows and sliding doors so you can feel the warmth of the sun and fresh air, regardless of the location of the home. We utilize contrasting materials, mixing warm and cool elements, always with a pop of color. Our projects have a finely tuned eye for detail with each element of the project designed and perfectly coordinated. People can feel our designs which stimulate all the senses. Our surrounding environment directly affects our psychological well-being. We design spaces to be a series of experiences that transform how people feel, happy, joyous, calm, creative, stimulated.

AJ: What is something you hope to see trending in design in the future?

SJ: Sustainable building will become more universal. To design and build to more energy-efficient, ideally, passive house standards to reduce utility expenses by 70% and create healthier environments. I hope building trends will eventually reach net-zero construction.

AJ: What's a guilty pleasure you have?

SJ: I adore chocolate and eat it each and every day. It is always a treat to look forward to and makes me so happy!

AJ: If you weren't a designer, you'd be a?

SJ: A film director. Architecture is about creating experiences and series of vignettes that tell a story. While film and architecture are very different creative platforms, I think my innate ability to create a beautiful narrative would translate well to the entertainment industry.



AJ: What's your favorite cocktail?

SJ: Vodka gimlet straight up. It is perfectly delicious, tart from the lime with just the right amount of sweetness. I adore the cheerful yellow color of the cocktail as well.

AJ: What are three words to describe where you live?

SJ: Light-infused, sublime, joyous.

AJ: What's the weirdest thing a client has ever asked you?

SJ: A client that was in her 80s asked me to design three full walls of floor-to-ceiling mirrors in every bathroom. She claimed we have to confront and embrace our bodies each and every day. We have one body and need to be happy with it in any shape or size, and if not happy, be reminded of how we look to make the necessary changes! I must say, she looks fabulous!

AJ: What are your ideal weekend plans?

SJ: A mixture of physical activity, culture, and socializing. Ideally, a weekend would include skiing or hiking in the cooler months, with my family. Swimming, kayaking, and tennis in the warmer months. Coupled with a museum or interesting architecture visit. Topped off by a large dinner or dance party with friends!

AJ: What's your design pet peeve?

SJ: Too many competing materials in one space. I have a rule of three materials maximum in one space to keep clean, sleek, and elegant. Too many materials tend to make spaces feel cramped, busy, and hectic.



AJ: Do you get your eight hours a night? – what is your schedule like?

SJ: Hardly ever! Juggling three children, work, multiple house rentals, and seeing friends keeps me beyond busy! I thrive on being busy. The more I have to do, the more productive I am. But that does not include a lot of sleep, especially during the workweek. I am fine on six hours of sleep a night and then a good catch-up on the weekend to balance it all out.

AJ: How would you define your work in three words?

SJ: Unique, sublime, inviting.

AJ: Favorite tea to decompress, and in what mug?

SJ: I have a cup of Earl Gray tea with a drop of milk every day at 4 pm, ideally in a bright yellow happy face mug my son made me. It is my ritual I brought with me from England. A little pick-me-up in the afternoon to help push through the final hours of work each day or a spot of relaxation by the fire after an active day outdoors on weekends.

AJ: Which room in the house do you find yourself working from the most? Why? How does this inform your thoughts about architecture?

SJ: The kitchen! The kitchen is the center of the household and life. That is where I typically end up working, despite having a lovely home office. The reality is when working from home I am often multitasking and the kitchen is where it is all happening: kids homework, cooking, snacking, working. My kitchen is a heavenly space with a full wall of windows, and views on all four sides in every direction. It's light-infused, open and airy, cheerful with pops of all my favorite colors: orange, red, and yellow. It's an inspiring, joyous place to work.

AJ: Where is the first place you want to travel now that everything is opening up?

SJ: I am dying to return to India. I absolutely adore India – the people, the colors, the tastes and smells, design and architecture – overloading the senses in every way. India is a place of great importance in my life, having lived there in the past. India has inspired my designs in so many ways, in particular my love for different materials and warm colors. I strive to stimulate all the senses when people interact with my designs.



About the Maker | As Principal of her firm, Sarah Jefferys has completed numerous residential and commercial commissions, including apartment, townhouse, and loft renovations and additions, offices, retail, new apartment buildings, and new residential builds throughout New England and across the United States. A passionate advocate for sustainable design and the environment, Jefferys is an expert in Passive House design and strives to own a net positive firm within the next five years.

In the over 20 years of Sarah Jefferys Design, Jefferys has become an authority in New York City and Brooklyn townhouse architecture and design, country home construction, and bespoke structures. Personally designing each and every project, Jefferys gives her clients a customized space that feels like an experience to travel through and inhabit, with every detail perfected.

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