

Abstract of article appearing in the Austin American-Statesman  
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## **MELANIE SPENCER: INTERIOR DIALOGUE**

# Design community is putting Austin on the map Interior design increasingly in the national spotlight.

Thursday, March 23, 2006

Design in Austin is gaining momentum. This shouldn't come as a surprise considering the strength of the city's other creative scenes, from music and film to fashion and art.

Austin might not be a hub of historically significant exterior and interior design the likes of which one finds in New York, Paris or London, but interior design in Texas in general and Austin in particular is in the national spotlight more often these days.

Almost every month, Austin-based stories and references pop up in magazines such as ReadyMade, Architectural Digest and Dwell, just to name a few. Local furniture designers — such as Jared Huke of Xeno Objects, Todd Campbell and Jennifer Chenoweth of Fisterra Studio, and interior and furniture designer Marla Henderson of Marla Henderson Design Group — win contests and are repeatedly written about in magazines as designers to watch. And local decorators and designers take part in shows on cable networks such as HGTV and TLC.

Well-executed takes on traditional, Western, Arts and Crafts, rustic, country, eclectic, Tuscan and Old World styles have been the norm in Austin interiors for some time. Other styles were sprinkled here and there, they just weren't prevalent.

(Note: Learn your design style at [www.hgtv.com](http://www.hgtv.com). They have a list of styles including descriptions and photos, plus a fun, 12-question "What's Your Style?" quiz to help you define your style.)

Modern is also becoming more popular. Retailers that promote the often sleek, sometimes sparse but always vibrant style, such as Design Within Reach and Target, have had a hand in the movement. Liz Lambert, owner of the retro-modern retreat Hotel San José, recently gave a talk at Design Within Reach. She spoke about the extensive process of remodeling and decorating the space, which was a rundown motel when she bought it in the late '90s. The crowd was standing-room-only — another sign of Austin's passion for learning about design.

I caught up with Lambert on the phone a few days later to discuss Austin design a little more. She says she thinks it's hard to separate the Austin design scene from the rest of the country, because it reflects what's happening elsewhere. We agreed that availability, accessibility and information on good design is a part of that growth, here and nationally.

"It will be interesting to see what happens," Lambert says. For example: "Everyone is getting educated on a Barcelona Chair. Does homogenization follow?"

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