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REAL ESTATE

WHEN INTERIOR DESIGN RUNS IN THE FAMILY

Gideon Mendelson

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BY | THE INDEPENDENT

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Gideon Mendelson. Independent/Ty Wenzel

“All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother,” Abraham Lincoln once said. The influence of Gideon Mendelson’s late mother, also an interior designer, certainly influenced his career pivot. After graduating from Columbia University with a degree in architecture, Gideon Mendelson founded The Mendelson Group in 2003. But interior design was already in the blood, and we’re glad it was.

We caught up with Mendelson on one of his weekends in the Hamptons to learn more about her influence on his award-winning work.

You earned an architecture degree from Columbia University.

I studied both architecture and film at Columbia. My parents encouraged me to find and study things I was passionate about. At the time, architecture and film seemed like subjects I’d both enjoy and excel at.

What’s your favorite building in the world architecturally?

There are too many for me to have an absolute favorite, but Antoni Gaudí’s La Pedrera in Barcelona certainly always makes me smile.

Your mother was an interior designer in Scarsdale. Was this influential in your pivoting into interior design? How did your mother feel about you following in her footsteps?

Of course. Design is in my blood. My mother and I spent a lot of time studying design together when I was a kid. We would go through design magazines or just discuss what we liked. She was thrilled when I told her I was studying architecture at Columbia. She even audited a class to spend some time with me. We started Mendelson Group together in 2003.

How would you describe your interior design style?

My tastes in decorative furnishings range from the 1920s to1980s. But, the truth is, I like all styles when they are executed successfully. I’m not only interested in specifying beautiful pieces for my projects. It goes beyond “the things.”

My focus is on how design can impact our lives. I use more of that philosophy rather than a certain style when I approach my work. Great design makes room for living and doing. It shapes movements, inspires interactions, and creates memories for a family. Design powers how it all plays out in a home.

I believe that I don’t just “do design,” but I design for what design can do.

You’ve received a ton of press and acknowledgement for your work. Is there one project that is

particularly meaningful for you?

Before she passed away a year ago, I collaborated with my mother on an apartment in Brooklyn that was meant for her. She had once been a pure traditionalist, but this space reflects her evolving taste — including how I had influenced her — and I tried to channel her spirit in the execution of the design. It's been so nice to get positive feedback on this project from my peers who knew her.

What about a project that was your favorite?

We completed a project on West End Avenue in New York City a few years ago. The design process went smoothly, we shared an interest in 20th-Century design, and the clients have become good friends of mine.

At the end of the day, I just want to work with people I like and have the chance to do good work.

You were named one of the "Top 10 New Trad Designers" by Traditional Home in 2012. What about modern homes?

Our projects vary based on the locations, existing architectural styles, and the clients' needs and preferences. We don't think of Mendelson Group as having one style, because we like all styles when they are executed successfully.

We follow a structured design process, but never a formula. It keeps things interesting for our team.

Do you prefer designing for city apartments or Hamptons homes — and why?

I love both. We approach these two types of projects differently. In the city, where many of our clients have their primary residences, every inch really counts. We design very efficiently for families and their busy lives. Everything has a place and there is a place for everything.

In the country (often the Hamptons), where many of our clients have second homes, our focus is creating spaces where these families can have fun, relax, and escape from busy, overwhelming city lives. People tend to be a little more at ease when it comes to designing second homes, so it can often be more fun for our team.

Do you ever have to bid on projects or does an architect or homeowner just call you direct?

I usually get calls directly. My relationship with my clients is built on trust, so establishing a personal and direct rapport starts from the onset. I wouldn't want it any other way.

Are there any trends that our readers need to know about? What are you excited about?

I find that I am growing more excited about the purity of natural materials and the beauty of simple form.

If money were no object, what would you like to design for?

I would love to help create sense of "home" in community centers or shelters for underprivileged children or families. The goal would be to create places that feel comfortable, safe, and beautiful. It's the ultimate testament to my belief in what design can do to impact lives.

What are you currently working on?

We are currently working on multiple residential projects in Manhattan, Westchester, New Jersey, and the Hamptons. And I'm contemplating kicking off the re-design of my home in the city in Park Slope.

What are some of your favorite go-to magazines and/or books for design inspiration?

I keep Alexander Spelt's "Styles of Ornament" and Stephen Calloway's "The Elements of Style" within reach of my desk.

How are you using social media and has it helped your marketing efforts?

We hired a Director of Marketing almost two years ago, but we didn't go straight to social media. We spent time outlining what we believe in as a team, as a brand, and what we want to accomplish from a business perspective.

We built out a comprehensive annual marketing plan and it's amazing what we've accomplished. Social media now accounts for about 70 percent of our lead generation.

When you're not designing incredibly gorgeous interiors, what do you do for fun?

I have three beautiful, energetic, chatty children that keep me rather busy. I also love to cook and entertain.

When we can, we escape to our house in Sagaponack on the weekends and I spend the days trying new recipes and cooking old favorites. It's relaxing, the kids pitch in, and then we can all sit around the kitchen table and eat as a family. There's nothing better.

To learn more about The Mendelson Group, visit www.mendelsongroupinc.com.

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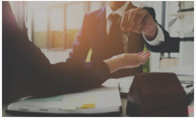

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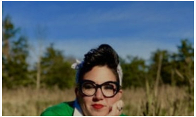

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