CELEBRITY DESIGNERS

50 INTERVIEWS ON DESIGN, ARCHITECTURE, AND LIFE

MARIA SPASSOV
founder of design-elements-blog.com

MÓNICA ANDINA and FERNANDO TAPIA

Interior Designers
Madrid, Spain

"The key to happiness is letting your heart guide you."

How would you describe your style?

Eclectic, functional, casual, fresh or sophisticated—it depends on the project. We love shifting from one to another.

When did you first discover your love of interior design?

Mónica: As a kid, I used to make houses with my father´s cigar boxes, creating models without noticing. Also, I was lucky enough to get a close view of Mexican interior designers and architects, who introduced me into this captivating world.

Fernando: I have always loved art, antiques, and spaces. When I was young, I never thought of it as a way of life until I suddenly found myself decorating other people's houses.

How did you get your first assignment?

Fernando: We were invited to design the lobby of L´Oreal offices in Madrid. After that, friends of friends of family.

Looking back at your first project, what knowledge do you wish you had back then in designing interiors?

Fernando: The most important would have been the experience of years of work, but also less fear and more strength when saying no. Maybe an administrative partner would have made the beginning easier.

Is there a designer who has influenced you?

Mónica: At the beginning, Barragan, Yturbe, Legorreta, and then an endless list of designers who create projects with soul.

Fernando: Hoffman, Hicks, Douquette... so many designers, periods, and artists.

Some designers believe that the first piece for any room is the rug or a painting that sets the color palette. What is your first source of inspiration?

Fernando: It depends. Sometimes the space itself, sometimes a piece the client has, a fabric we saw and both loved, or a great piece of art; after that the rest seems easier.

What do you do if you want the room to feel calm and serene?

Mónica: We try to balance the layout, use clear colors, a lot of fabrics and natural materials like woods or stones.

How do you achieve a good scale? Scale is a really interesting and difficult topic.

Fernando: Scale is very important—not only to achieve, but also to break with some extra-large piece that creates a statement. I think scale and proportion come naturally after a lot of work, study, and contemplation.

What do you enjoy most in your work?

Mónica: I find the beginning of the project very exciting, adapting spaces for the people who use them and achieving surroundings that can be enjoyed.

Fernando: At the end of a project, when you get the chance to see and evaluate your own work. When designing a restaurant, it is the first time I eat.

What do you love to do when you aren't designing?

Mónica: Spending time with my family, watching my kids grow, traveling, and above all having fun.

Fernando: Entertaining and being entertained, traveling, flipping through magazines.

If you have dinner with anyone in history, who would it be?

Fernando: Maybe with myself twenty years ago. I would have a lot great advice to give to me! Other than that, I would make a dinner party for around a hundred historical personalities; too difficult to choose just one. We would have much fun.

Mónica: Pffff! I can think of an endless list of historical personalities. Frida Khalo, Napoleon, Isabela I of Castile, Platon, Luther, endless philosophers... so probably I would stick to a dinner with my grandfather who died twelve years ago. We could talk about everything we haven´t been able to talk.

Who are your favorite artists?

Mónica: Each artist is special and unique. At this time, Paul Lisak surprises me a lot.

Fernando: Russian constructivism, abstract expressionism, Spanish court painters… so many artists and styles.

What are your favorite books?

Mónica: Depending on my vital moment, I look for different literature. The greatest thing about books is that they can create a parallel space or enhance a real emotion. Lately, I'm focused on research books.

Fernando: Again, so many. Choosing a favorite is impossible. I re-read Woody Allen a lot—so funny and easy!

What are your favorite movies?

Fernando: Usually independent movies about feelings from a positive point of view, or historical movies, but I don't have "the movie I see twice a year and of which I know all the dialogue."

Mónica: Amelie, Groundhog Day, Les Choristes, Chocolate, Breakfast at Tiffany's, and The Shining.

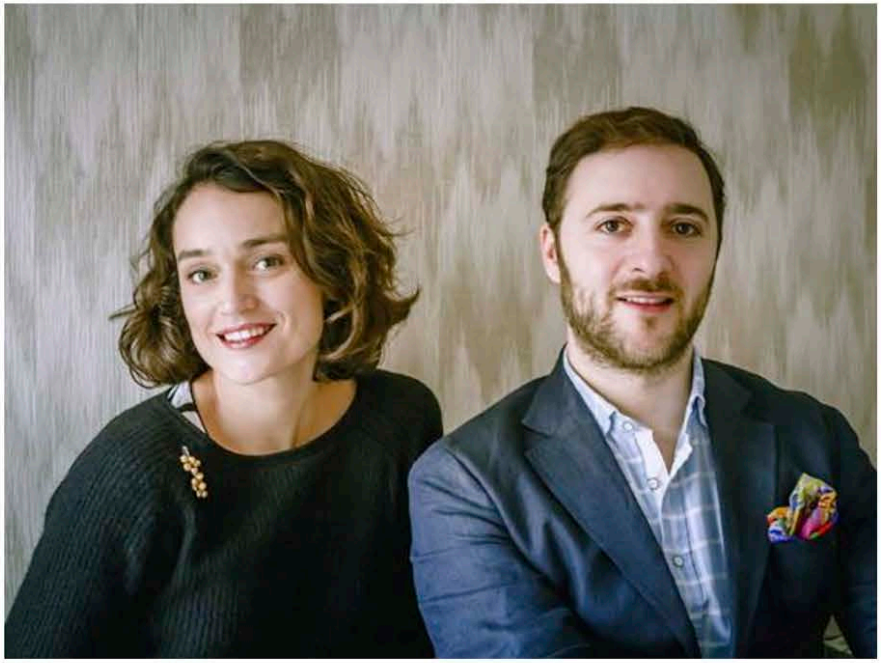
What are your favorite places in Madrid?

Fernando: La Tulipe (our latest restaurant design), Juan March Foundation, The Retiro Park, the city as a whole and, of course, home.

What does success mean to you?

Mónica: Being able to work at what we love and taking care of our personal life and family. Sometimes more work doesn't mean more success.

What is the key to happiness?

Fernando: I wish I'd had that answer. I would be happy and rich by now. But I think it revolves around love and being at peace with oneself.

Mónica: Letting your heart guide you!