

SBLS

Santa Barbara Life & Style Magazine

September/October 2025



A TASTE OF THE SEASON

remixing spaces

KISHANI PERERA EFFORTLESSLY COMBINES
TIMELESS AND MODERN ELEMENTS WITH HER
MIX-AND-MATCH DESIGN PHILOSOPHY



BY *Andrea Manokian*
PHOTOGRAPHY *Blake Bronstad*

When we think of interior design, we often picture furniture, fabrics and curated decor. But Los Angeles-based interior designer Kishani Perera approaches projects with a deeper lens, considering not just the aesthetics but the very bones of a home. From the raw materials used in construction to the components that make up every finish and fixture, her process focuses on thoughtful, intentional design from start to finish.

Having worked with A-list clients like Harry Styles, Bruce Willis, Molly Sims and more, Kishani has built a reputation as one of the most sought-after interior designers in the industry. And although she welcomes projects all across the country, her latest features a 3,500-square-foot historic home in Santa Barbara, originally built in the 1930s and designed by Edwards and Plunkett—a once renowned architectural firm known for shaping Santa Barbara’s identity through their use of the Spanish Colonial Revival style.

“My design style is definitely eclectic, and it’s very much tailored to each client,” Kishani says. Her versatility and refusal to confine herself to a single design style keep her projects dynamic and inventive. “I’m happy to do anything because I love everything from Victorian to mid-century to contemporary. That’s what keeps things fun and interesting, and I can appreciate something about every era and every culture,” she adds.

Chatting with Kishani on the phone, I can feel her enthusiasm—her energy is infectious, her excitement palpable. She’s bubbly, sweet and full of life, which makes it all the more surprising to learn she’s been battling her share of enervating health conditions for decades. “I have been debilitated with a myriad of health problems since I was twenty years old,” she says. “It came down to a bad combination of genes and environmental exposures,” she explains. And at the root of her health struggles? Mycotoxins. This 10-letter word has become the bane of

Kishani’s existence. But mycotoxins aren’t just harmful to her—they’re damaging to everyone.

After realizing that most people spend the majority of their time indoors, Kishani was inspired to understand how these invisible toxins affect both our homes and our health. “It really sent me down this path of investigating, understanding and learning about different materials in our homes,” she says. Given the extremity of her health conditions, there are homes Kishani cannot physically step into, making her breathtaking work as an interior designer all the more impressive and inspiring. “At first, I was scared to talk about it. I thought, ‘No one is going to hire me. What am I going to do?’ And then, the more I started talking about it, random people started emailing me saying, ‘I saw something you were talking about, and I feel like everything you said resonates.’”

Today, Kishani is known for offering clients a healthier alternative to traditional homes—what she calls “healthy homes.” These are spaces where every single material is meticulously considered and mindfully sourced. Whether it’s swapping fiberglass insulation for natural sheep’s wool or avoiding chemical-laden paints and treatments, Kishani and her team have healthier alternatives for just about everything for clients who are interested in such solutions. “My point in life is to help people because I went through 20 years of hell,” she says. “I had to turn lemons into lemonade at some point,” she adds with a loud, infectious laugh. Even though we’re chatting over the phone, I can tell she’s smiling.

Having been a committed vegan for two decades, Kishani even has experience building fully vegan homes, where everything—and she means everything—is certifiably vegan. “We’ve also done totally organic houses from ground-up construction, and every single element in the home was 100 percent organic,” she says. “Every fabric had to be organic, every fill had to be organic, every piece of wood—everything,” she adds.



“THE SPACE FEATURES *elevated* *pieces* PRESENTED IN A WAY *that exude* BOTH COMFORT *and livability.* WHEN *flamboyant elements* ARE *incorporated in ways* THAT ENHANCE THE SPACE *rather than* OVERPOWERING IT.”



Kishani Perera Inc. is a full-service interior design firm with collaboration integrated at every stage. “We do floor plans, 3D renderings of everything, and then I do a lot of FaceTime calls with the client to understand who they are and what they want,” she says. Kishani has become known in the design industry for her effortless way of mixing and matching elements—both old and new, as well as high-end and more accessible pieces. This “remixing,” if you will, served as the inspiration behind her book, *Vintage Remix: The Interiors of Kishani Perera*. The book offers a glimpse into Kishani’s mix-and-match philosophy and even includes a foreword written by acclaimed actor and client, Gary Oldman.

Speaking about her latest Santa Barbara project, Kishani says, “I love the aesthetic in Santa Barbara, and I think what we do really translates well [here].” This project features a variety of personal elements that the homeowners wanted to incorporate in a way that felt cohesive and intentional with the overall design and layout of the space. That’s where Kishani’s signature mix-and-match approach came into play, and she was soon hard at work, seamlessly integrating style and sentiment.

In the kitchen, Kishani and her team built a custom metal pot rack to display the homeowners’ antique brass pot collection, which was passed down to them by their family. The kitchen also features hardware from Waterworks and a faucet from Waterstone. Creating custom pieces that highlight sentimental items is important to Kishani—an approach that manifests in the home’s library as well. “They have an amazing collection of books, and they wanted to display them, so we designed the built-in library with the rolling ladder and the detail on the cabinetry,” she says. The design was a months-long feat, given the functional rolling ladder, intricate cabinetry, and other delicate details. In the kid’s room, bright yellow ottomans belonging to the homeowners are effortlessly incorporated, alongside Peter Dunham fabric and other playful components.

The living room features yet another custom piece: a curvature sofa with wood framework, situated alongside a Kelly Wearstler credenza. The home seamlessly carries its aesthetic and design style from room to room. One way Kishani achieves this is by incorporating elements like rugs and drapery that complete each space. “I like a big grounding rug,” she says. “I think it really finishes off a space,” she adds. The home features rugs sourced from Lulu and Georgia and Jan Kath, bringing warmth and coziness throughout.

The master bedroom stands out as one of Kishani’s favorite spaces. “That room is serenity to me. When I look

at that room, it’s just peace.” To achieve this quiet sense of tranquility, she incorporated a master bed from Lawson-Fenning and mushroom-shaped clay lamps from In Common With.

For Kishani, a home has to feel like just that, a home. “I want people to be comfortable enough to feel like nothing is so precious that they can’t sit there,” she says. This is why the space features elevated pieces presented in a way that exude both comfort and livability. When flamboyant elements are added, they’re incorporated in ways that enhance the space rather than overpowering it—like the Jonathan Browning chandelier in the dining room.

The homeowners embody an innate sense of creativity and design, having worked on other homes themselves and brought in Kishani as a sounding board—someone to bounce ideas off and draw inspiration from. While the house was still under construction, Kishani Perera Inc. stepped in. “We were a fresh perspective to help guide them,” she says. “We helped on the construction side of it, and then furnished the house from top to bottom after that,” she adds.

Speaking of the homeowners, Kishani says she was proud of them for retaining much of the integrity of the historic home. “They were very respectful of the history of the house, even down to the registers on the wall,” she says. “They had come up with the layout already, but we were working with them on paint colors, hardware, lighting, the plaster hood in the kitchen, the pot rack and the open shelving,” among other elements.

As for what’s next for Kishani, she says she’d love to take on more projects in the Santa Barbara area. Nearby, she and her team are currently partnering with victims of the tragic Pacific Palisades fire that wreaked havoc on the neighborhood earlier this year. They have been assisting with rebuilding and redesigning the homes of those wishing to incorporate many of the design philosophies Kishani has championed for years, such as fire-resistant building materials, organic and non-toxic elements and much more. Whatever the design challenge, she’s ready for it, and no doubt will face it with the same enthusiasm and energy I could detect over the phone.

Before ending my call with Kishani, I asked her which song she would choose to describe the feel of the Santa Barbara home she recently designed. A big-time music enthusiast, she did not take this question lightly. After thinking it over for a few days, she texted me the following: “I’m going with ‘Just Like Heaven,’ but the Dinosaur Jr. cover, not the original. So it’s a classic with a modern twist, just like the house!”*