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Meet the Designer: Michael Garvey

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by Site Staff



Michael Garvey is renowned for his sophisticated and casual living in the homes he designs in Greenwich, Manhattan, and the Hamptons. This includes a focus on tailored, elegant, yet casual homes mostly for young families. We had the pleasure to interview Michael to learn more about his background, what inspires him, and to decorate a small space.



1. How did you get into design?

My background is in fine arts—sculpture, specifically—but I learned early on that I enjoy working with clients on actual spaces more than working in a studio making art. From that point forward, I took the long road to becoming an interior designer with graduate school, international study, and working in interior design studios before going out on my own.

2. How would you describe your style?

My style is historically-informed and modern in feeling. The look will change with each client, but the outcome is always a tailored and detailed reflection of my clients. I don't like to do the same thing twice, and I love decorative arts history, so I try to create looks for my clients that are both historically literate and have a modern sensibility.



3. What is the process like when you work with clients?

My work comes mostly from word-of-mouth referrals, and my clients will tell you that I spend a lot of time with them. This gives me the chance to build real relationships with my clients, understand how they live, and create stylish living spaces that perform.

4. What are some of your go-to tips for maximizing small spaces?

- **Don't be afraid of large art in a small space.** The drama of scale can amplify the size of a small space.
- **Sectionals are magic.** They can create generous seating in a small space (or a room with limited wall space).
- **Hit every layer.** Don't omit essential items—area rug, window treatments, a reading lamp, side tables, pillows, a throw blanket—just because the space is small. Hitting every layer means your small space will feel well-appointed and comfortable, regardless of size.
- **Go vertical in a small space.** Use drapes as tall as the ceiling to lengthen windows and elevate the feeling of a small space. Select art that has a strong vertical orientation (or create a collage of smaller pieces) to emphasize height.

- **Avoid open storage in a small space.** Nothing makes a small space feel like a storage closet like open storage. Keep the clutter you need behind doors and curate the items you want to see every day.
- **Paint it out.** Keeping color consistent in a small space allows you to direct the eye. If you need additional storage, paint it the color of your walls. If the architecture of your home is not what your dreams are made of, paint it all the same color and direct attention to the furniture and accessories that are yours to choose.

5. What are some of your favorite signature pieces and/or brands you like to work with?

I love Holly Hunt outdoor fabrics. They are indestructible for homes with children, animals, and adults alike, but they are so luxurious you would never know the difference. Phillip Jeffries wallpaper is a primary tool in my toolbox. The textures are transformative. I also love an upholstered ottoman with storage below for books and magazines. Nothing says 'put your feet up' like an upholstered ottoman. Topped with a tray for beverages and storage below for clutter, you're all set.

6. Does your personal home style differ from your branded style?

My home is an amplified version of what I do for clients. I call it my “urban cottage.” It's a 19th-century cottage I restored that would look at home on Nantucket, but it's set in an industrial section of Williamsburg, Brooklyn. It's both traditional and modern at the same time. It's my oasis, it keeps me centered, and it reflects my personality. That's essentially what I get to create for other people.