

CUSTOM CONSTRUCTIONS

Design duo Virginia Toledo and Jessica Geller of New York-based id 810 design group strive to give their clients not just beautiful spaces, but homes that reflect their character and fulfill their dreams. *By Christine Aebischer*



As many homeowners have discovered, even the finest décor and most beautiful finishes just can't make a poorly laid out house feel like home. That's where Virginia Toledo and Jessica Geller come in.

The principals behind id 810 design group also have a background in construction, allowing them to truly transform spaces to fit their clients' visions and lifestyles. "If an apartment or house is lacking in architecture, there aren't that many wallpaper options and furniture to make it look good," shares Toledo. "[Our background] is super helpful for clients. They can really entrust in us to make some big architectural or construction decisions for them."

The pair also is often the liaison between client and contractor, helping clients understand what work is necessary, what they can do without and what they can realistically expect within their budget. "To give someone the ability to put their own stamp on their home is so rewarding," adds Geller.

For two people who are so in sync, from their design visions to their outfits (they

admit they often show up to meetings in nearly identical outfits, unplanned) it's hard to believe they were complete strangers 10 years ago. In 2006, Toledo founded id 810 design group after working for a high-end residential design build firm. "I saw the need for a designer that had aesthetic experience and a strong construction background, so I took a leap of faith," she says. To keep up with the nearly immediate demand for her specialized services, Toledo realized she needed to bring someone else on board, so she put an ad on Craigslist and the rest, as they say, is history.

"We tend to agree a lot," says Geller. "Clients will challenge us and speak to each of us separately to get our individual opinions because they think we're pushing some kind of agenda, but our opinions are the same. We have the same vision." However, their personal styles vary enough that they each bring something unique to their designs. Geller describes her own home as "very livable and comfortable" with mainly neutrals, while Toledo's home has "a lot of color, in a tamed way."

"I can be a little more restrained and



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To marry this Manhattan apartment's pre-war aesthetic with the owner's modern taste, Toledo and Geller took inspiration from European flats: old architecture paired with minimalistic furniture. They stained the floor in a dark, rich color but left the finish matte, and chose a dynamic and varied arabescato marble for the supersize mantel.



rigid,” shares Toledo. “I go back to wanting everything to be perfect, and Jess complements that. She likes things to be a little off. She throws in that weird thing that makes sense at the very end.” Geller also finds Toledo to be the perfect balance, saying, “I hate when something feels so perfectly done that it feels forced. I like something that at the end of the day is a little bit of a curveball. Virginia keeps me focused.”

They both agree that a home should never feel too new, and rooms where every piece of furniture can be recognized from a particular store don’t interest them. They often spend their weekends thrifting or antiques to find one-of-a-kind pieces they can reinvent or update for use in a future project. “When we look for things that speak to clients, something they have a passion for,

The designers merged Mid-century and glamour in this Brooklyn apartment with a custom-designed dresser and vanity, brass and fur stool and an iron and wood chandelier.

it personalizes the space a bit more,” they explain. “We want the space to have soul.”

Finding these unexpected items also gives them inspiration and helps them keep their designs fresh. They try to never repeat the same design element twice, even if specifically asked by a client. Some hallmarks of their brand include a neutral palette, which they find their clients prefer to color, and lots of texture to balance the neutrals. They often juxtapose textures or materials, such as chunky linen mixed with mohair and silk, or heavily textured wood mixed with marble, and they love to mix metals. When starting a



new project, the pair spends time getting to know the clients and how they go about their day-to-day life so they can create a space that perfectly complements them, as well as the architecture and proportions of the house itself.

The pair acknowledges that they have come a long way since 2006, and by learning how to do things the hard way, they now have the experience and know-how to tackle any

This residence near Lincoln Center combines a neutral palette with the clients’ warmer California tones.

project. “Neither of us had worked for a large design house,” explains Geller. “We really immersed ourselves and it had its challenges, but we have a lot of tools in our belt because of it.” Their projects continue to grow in size and scale, such as an entire building they designed in Dallas, Texas, and the complete renovation of a three-bedroom apartment once owned by Helen Hunt.

Textured gray-limed oak and Diana Royale marble combine with glitzier finishes, like the gemstone chandelier, for “Bedford Post meets Manhattan.”

Another project that especially stands out for the designers is a New York City apartment they renovated about four years ago for a family who, prior to the renovation, hardly spent any time in the apartment because they didn’t feel at home. Instead, they would escape to their weekend house at every possible chance. However, after Toledo and Geller revealed their new apartment, the family sold their weekend home. “We recently saw her and she reminded us that we changed the way they lived. That’s what keeps us motivated. We have the ability to improve people’s lives,” says Toledo.



As id 810 design group enters its 10th year, Toledo and Geller are excited to expand their brand and take on new adventures. They were recently awarded the International Furnishings and Design Association’s Rising Star award for 2015, and they also created their own furniture collection in collaboration with The New Traditionalists’ private-label program, The Syndicate. They are now looking to establish a brick-and-mortar studio/retail space where they can showcase their collection, in addition to their other custom designs, refurbished antiques and pieces that aren’t typically found in stores from vendors they regularly work with. “We want to do everything: a boutique jewelry store, restaurant, lounge, hotel,” they share. “Every time we’ve said we wanted to do something, we’ve been able to make it happen, so keep an eye out for our hotel.”

For their newly empty-nester clients’ New York City home, Toledo and Geller opted for light colors in various textures, including wool, velvet, leather, silk and mohair. To balance the bold area rug, the pair chose a weighty, acrylic cocktail table.

