

# A Natural Progression

By Christine Aebischer

Designer Sammy Castro blurs the lines between indoors and outdoors to create the ultimate living spaces for his clients.



Palm Springs, California



Manhattan Beach, California

Sammy Castro is a dreamer. He envisions fluid spaces full of light and rich in texture, where indoor spaces transition seamlessly into the outdoors.

As a landscape architect, interior designer and architect, Castro is in control of the entire design process, allowing him to bring these visions from his mind into existence.

"I love the very end when the dream is real, you see your dream and are able to walk through your dream," says Castro. "It's the ultimate feeling and why I love this progression so much."

The California native has been drawn to design for as long as he can remember, rearranging his room and parents' house even as a child. While he originally planned on going to school for architecture, a family friend swayed him to study landscape architecture instead.

"I like design and interacting with natural elements. I thought it seemed like a natural fit," says Castro.

After graduating from the School of Environmental Design at California Polytechnic University, Pomona, Castro founded Sammy Castro Design in 2005. The Los Angeles-based company has since worked on over 150 hospitality, commercial and residential projects throughout the U.S. and Spain.

No matter what the project at hand may be, Castro always keeps two things in mind while developing his vision: the client and the site.

"It's important to listen to what the site is telling you, where the views are, where the wind comes from, where the sun is, the topography," he explains.

By working in harmony with the site, Castro optimizes the natural elements and creates spaces, both outside and inside, in which people feel good.

"Living in Southern California, you experience spaces all as one – live indoors and outdoors, and I'm drawn to that aesthetic, to design as one," says Castro.

One of Castro's favorite projects is one where the lines between inside and outside were nearly indistinguishable. He and a friend decided to buy a property in West Hollywood where they would build and design their own dream home.

"I was really able to dream," muses Castro. "We had free range because we didn't have to present to a client; we were just doing it for ourselves."

Castro decided on a garden theme, designing the lower level at ground level and placing a 40-year-old olive tree in the center of the house. "The entire house was hugging this tree," he says.

In all of his projects, Castro especially likes to experiment with

PHOTOS COURTESY SAMMY CASTRO DESIGN





West Hollywood, California



Palm Springs, California

texture in order to enhance a space. By adding elements with contrasting textures, like a woven rug over smooth concrete or pairing a thin-bladed grass with something of a stronger form, “it helps animate the space,” he says.

His unique work led Castro to be chosen as a featured designer in this year’s Palm Springs Modernism Week Show House by Christopher Kennedy, where he designed the landscape.

Castro describes the project as a great experience and a fun collaboration with Christopher Kennedy, with whom he shared an office when he first launched his company. He opted for green everything, in order to keep a simple backdrop to offset the architecture and interiors, he says.

In order to keep his designs inventive and fresh, Castro looks to the world around him and abroad for inspiration.

“It’s about being able to be inspired in general,” says Castro. “Sometimes it’s other people’s work, sometimes it’s raw, natural elements you find in your surroundings. It’s really

important to be able to travel, see the world and see different spaces.”

Before starting Sammy Castro Design, Castro traveled often, finishing his schooling in Italy and going on to live in Spain for three years before returning to the U.S. Now, he mostly travels within the U.S., working on projects that span 35 states, but his favorite place will remain Barcelona, Spain, he says, for its diverse landscapes.

“It’s a really big city, but it also doesn’t feel so overwhelming,” he says. “It has a lot of different, intimate spaces – certain portions feel like you’ve left the city.”

As his company progresses, Castro hopes to expand the interior design and architecture departments until they share equal parts with the landscape architecture, so that Sammy Castro Design can be the lead design team on an increasing number of projects.

“We want to be able to take our original vision all the way through to the end,” he says. “It’s about staying true to that vision.” **UH**