

## MARKET

### studio tour

# Perfectly Imperfect

Join our conversation with designer Gabrielle Aker at her Los Angeles studio.

INTERIOR DESIGN BY AKER INTERIORS  
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**G**abrielle Aker founded her eponymous design firm in 2016 with one simple intention: Adding beauty to people's lives through creating visually thoughtful spaces that were highly personalized and individualistic. In downtown Los Angeles—specifically, a historically protected Arts District building—business is thriving. Aker Interiors HQ functions as a studio and showroom to workshop ideas and have client presentations and is the space she uses as her daily office. The commute is easy—she lives in a different loft in the building—so it also serves as a guest suite when family comes to town. Most of all, it's her style come to life.

#### What does design mean to you?

It's so hard to boil it down into something tangible! Design, to me, is a striving for more beauty in life and a desire to create something new that pushes the art form forward. It's an acceptance that practicality and beauty can coexist, and it's an understanding that our surroundings at home really affect us. When I first started my company, I was under the impression that it was a superficial business, which I struggled with internally because I wanted to do something consequential, but I quickly saw the impact I could have on my client's lives through design and how much home matters.

#### How did this perspective evolve as you built your business?

I quickly found out the depth and complexity that goes into just "creating a pretty home." I'm obsessed with psychology and have always been aware of the impact our homes have on our psyche, affecting every area of our lives. But I didn't fully grasp how deep the connection really was until I was IN IT with clients. That understanding has informed the very connected and personal way we approach every project, allowing us to really know our clients and create spaces that speak to them.

#### How you describe your style?

I never know how to describe my design aesthetic, because it's always changing, and I hope it always will! But right now, I'd say my aesthetic is raw and organic, contemporary, and eclectic. I get equally excited about a crumbling Italian cottage as I do about a space oozing Japanese minimalism so I'm all over the board.

#### What do you love about creating unique interior spaces?

Core to my design perspective is a deep desire to create something different and new in our world of visual sameness, partnered with a connection to the needs and desires of the people that will be living in the space. I live in the tension of creating practical, livable spaces that are a feast for the eyes (aka the beautiful challenge of interior design). I believe spaces should be imperfectly organic, elevated, intriguing, and inspiring which means different things to different people, thus the deep dive we take with our clients to find out how that perspective translates into the way they live. I think a deep spatial knowledge is key to understanding the flow of a home and how it will be used which greatly influences design decisions. I'm hyper aware of lighting in every space I enter and always keep the natural light or lack thereof top of mind when creating layouts and sourcing for a project. My team and I also have a deep love of texture and rich tones that create moments of drama so as to intrigue anyone experiencing a space we've designed.

I don't think there's anything like the feeling of designing a space that's aesthetically beautiful and interesting and also functions for our client's real life. I love coming up with interesting solutions to very troubling (first world) problems during the construction phase that the client is thrilled with, and I love surprising clients with possibilities they could have never imagined for their home. It's an expansion of what home can be...both functional and inspiring.



**1.** Since the building is protected, the original bones of the space were still intact. "We just worked to enhance and optimize them," Gabrielle Aker says. "We took advantage of the 16-foot ceilings by building a mezzanine, which increased the usable square footage." They used raw materials like metal, wood, concrete, and stone—as well as a myriad of textures—to showcase the organic nature of the design firm's aesthetic.

**2.** The bathroom is a harmony of textures. "We used tile from Clé's collaboration with Fornace Brioni + Cristina Celestino on the floor to bring that old-world feel and paired it with Vast Studio's gorgeous, modern concrete sink, giving a bit of old and new," Gabrielle says.

**3.** "I knew I wanted the stairs to be metal and curve with the platform below, so we had a welder fabricate it along with the brass railing," she explains. "Since I love imperfect materials, I told him I wanted the brass railing to be raw and feel slightly unfinished...naturally he was confused, but I felt like raw worked best in the space."