

Julie James, Rio, LLC.

Rio Grand Valley Referenced In the Northwest.

Working in commercial design during the 1990s, I completed a series civic design projects for assisted living, educational centers and recreational complexes. It was fascinating to work with the many site variables to offer a functional response. With each, their designs morphed into a uniformed response.

This similarity was a subtle decision on my part to emulate what I had done with the prior success, to ensure further commissions. It was challenging in all the ways one would consider successful in this field, of interior design. The unique factor, that is design, was gone. The work was not fulfilling.

Not long before this time, I had moved to Oregon from life in the South Pacific region. I had come to the northwest wanting to reflect on my years of traveling and the experiences I had while competing in track and field. I returned to U of O's International Studies Department, to learn more about the dynamics of Asia and the West. I continued with the studies of History of Art/Architecture. I was devoted to learning all I could about the design portrayed by those of many cultures over time. It was my life.

Then on the professional side, I stepped into this different space by creating a series of numb, mindless interiors with these projects. It was what I assumed the board of directors' envisioned as acceptable. With further education, it was clear these designs I had generated were classic examples described by by Denise S Brown in, *Learning from Las Vegas: the Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form*.¹

(Brown wrote about how architecture took on an identity of product branding in many cases for its design reference. Also architecture began to be internationally common. There lacked a regional reference, and a thought to unique form follow function that served the individual clients.)

¹ Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form, By D.S. Brown (R. Venturi and S Izenour), Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972.

Short Sighted View Without Awareness: Western Focus In Design

It was very clear to me that over the past few centuries we tended to look only longitudinally, to the west, for design inspiration. The Americans looked to the prestigious schools of design from the 18th century of Renaissance of French Salons, and earlier Italy Renaissance Masters. The source of influence in American Monument Architecture was drawn back to early Greece for identity.

Thomas Jefferson quoted the Greek High Classical Order of balance and proportion, “symetia”, in his building plan. Jefferson direct quoted his Italian contemporary, Andrea Palladio’s version of Greece classicism for his Monticello.

The design precedence in Early American Architecture:

The Four Books of Architecture, by Palladio was Jefferson’s central source of architecture design. These illustrations below by Palladio are the direct references used by many. The palatial plan and the second, the iconic Palladio country home: The Villa Vicenza, are both reflected in Jefferson’s plan of Monticello.²



Rio, LLC: Looking for a Regional Reference

When designing for the Bend community of the high desert, I wanted to bring the geographic similarity up laterally from New Mexico and Arizona as a regional reference for my designs. I had made many trips to the Rio Grand Valley as a child. It was a region I found to be very interesting.

² Referenced below: <http://www.poplarforest.org/jefferson/architect>.
The Four Books of Architecture, Andrea Palladio.

Rio Designs – 1998

I had studied the flair of the Gaucho “Cowboys” of South America. The Spanish influence after conquering the regions, was grounded in the evolutionary crafted style of South America. It is a style that has more significance to the Northwest’s craftsmen honesty in expression.

In style, the furniture line I developed was well received. It was not suited in price to be profitable. Over time I continued to look to history when making sense of interior spaces for my clients. I had moved into working in decorative wall finishes to add meaning to interiors.

Later in the 1900’s I apprenticed with one of the best, Stig Erinerson (a renowned graphic artist and ASID acclaimed Wall Finisher), in wall finishes. From there I was successful on the ladder and scaffolding. I spent years painting layers of glazing to make walls look dimensional and old.

I still thought glazing walls was ‘faux’. Again I was emulating something else. The natural progression led me back to the studies of Art History at the University. I focused on Fresco and Wall Painting over time. From there I attended the Florence Academy of Art, learned enough Italian, and began importing the key ingredients to bring fresco techniques to the northwest.

Now the trial phase of northwest fresco has been completed. With the talented plaster craftsmen of the area, we offer a true regional fresco finis, using local materials mixed with earthen pigment for a permanent wall finish. This was possible by following the recipes of 13thc craftsmen mixed with modern materials.

JJames Designs, Allied Member ASID - 2013

Rio was changed to J James Designs to add interior furnishing for to our wall clients. I work in collaboration with the artisans of the northwest. It is a craftsmen tradition to work in-group.

With the new economy, I also do not feel comfortable charging a fee for opinion. When we think of our influences, no one person can actually claim an independent thought as valuable without an end product.

I now work with Parker Furniture for the best possible source for client furnishings. The wall fresco remains the core of my business plan. As in the spirit of collaboration of craftsmen movement, I believe valuable ideas should be free to consider, to share, not to be hidden for profit.

I am grateful for those who have encouraged me. I am in service to my clients, looking for inspiration from their lives, to the east, to the west, north and south. It is mutually rewarding, to render a meaningful response to the clients’ requests.

Mission Statement:

With the changes of this last year, my mission Statement is in draft form.

Follow the Guidelines of the ASID (American Society of Interior Designers) to offer the best possible interior design plan, keeping it current, relevant and reasonable, and always looking to invest in education. The main area of my work is in the specialty of wall fresco techniques.

Demographics:

The clients find me, and are looking for a unique design answer. Generally it is a higher end client, but not always.³

³ <http://www.asid.org/>