

Yvonne  
Jacobs takes  
a personal  
approach to  
career and  
community

By Kimberly Nicoletti

DESIGN  
*Tribe*





*The crew at Jacobs + Interiors enjoys a collaborative working relationship, both challenging and inspiring one another.*

PHOTO BY BRENT BINGHAM

Y

VONNE  
JACOBS  
understands

that homes are both sanctuaries and gathering places, so she designs interiors that inspire comfort, beauty and functionality. As the principle designer and owner of Jacobs + Interiors in Edwards, she fashions homes that reflect the essence of each homeowner. But her impact stretches much further than the walls of the countless residences she has shaped throughout the nation. Both personally and professionally, her mission involves helping people live the best life they possibly can.

## HOME IS WHERE HER HEART IS

Her own life reflects the values of tight-knit, supportive communities. She grew up in a modest house in Pueblo, Colorado, where home always acted as the hub of family gatherings.

“Comfort and beauty were at the core of it. My great grandmother was part Native American, and visits to her house consisted of baking, art activities, gardening — things that make a home wonderful,” Jacobs says. “She was always making things for her house. Her gardens were beautiful. Home was always just this big center — it was a big centerpiece of my life.”

Though she always loved art, including crafting items with her hands, just as her great-grandmother did, interior design wasn't initially on her radar; at the time, design firms didn't exist in Pueblo. Instead, she set her sights on fashion design — until she studied it for a year and realized how much sewing it involved. So she turned her attention to another fascination: psychology, which she studied at Colorado State University while also taking art classes.

It was in one of those art classes that someone encouraged her to sign up for an interior design class.



“Now that I look back, I feel like I was prepping myself for this my whole childhood, even at my great grandmother's house,” she says.

After graduation, she worked for a design firm in New York, where she met Chris, whom she eventually married. After realizing big-city life wasn't for her, she and Chris traveled for three months, ultimately ending up in Denver.

“It felt like home, coming back to Colorado,” she says.

## MOUNTAIN MOVES

While working for an interior design firm in Denver, she met Eddy Dumas, the then-vice president of Slifer Designs in Vail, who offered her a position.

“Chris and I were avid rock climbers and skiers, and we were coming up almost every weekend anyway, so we knew we eventually wanted to be in the mountains, but when you're young, you don't really understand how that can actually work,” she says.

They decided to try to carve out professional careers in Vail, and it paid off. Jacobs spent 20 years at Slifer Designs, building her skills and confidence to achieve the dream of owning her own company.

In 2018, she opened Jacobs + Interiors, at age 50.

“I was a bit older than most, but I also felt the wealth of knowledge and confidence built during that time has set me up for what is one of the best decisions in my life,” she says. “It was an inspiration to do design in a certain way ... it was going maybe even a step deeper for me than I had ever been.”

She began working out of her house, but her robust reputation with clients who continually sought her out required her to find commercial space in Edwards in less than a year.

“I was outgrowing my house — I ended up with a lot of samples and stuff taking over my whole house,” she says. “Getting that commercial space

was a big mile marker for me. I just broke down and cried because that was my first space that was mine.”

Since then, Jacobs + Interiors has obtained a second space — complete with a lounge area, coffee station and long meeting table — in Edwards, where the team holds meetings and showcases fabric samples.

“It's kind of where we do all the magic. It's where we create everything,” she says.

## A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO DESIGN

Her team, which now consists of six additional professionals, takes a thoughtful, systematic approach to projects. And, Jacobs' background in psychology assists her in delving even deeper into clients' wants and needs.

“There's this level of care, and there's this level of service to clients that is, I think, not typical in other firms. We really take the time to dig deep into their lives to figure out: What is the most

*Yvonne Jacobs' award-winning kitchen remodel in Beaver Creek features cabinetry from Heartwood Custom Woodworks and Herge barstools. The reclaimed wood walls by Arrigoni Woods add a natural, rustic element to the modern look of the kitchen. For this project, Jacobs was named a Design Icon by Luxe Interiors + Design, presented by kitchen powerhouses Sub-Zero, Wolf and Cove.*



beautiful space we can make for this person functionally, and how do we put them at ease and how can we make this fun for them? It doesn't have to be this stressful sort of thing," she says. "I have this amazing team, and we sit down and we talk about these things. We talk about process. We talk about how things are done in a certain way. We try to make things — I don't want to say the same — but predictable in a certain way that makes someone feel comfortable. It's like if you were inviting someone to your home: You want them to feel at ease, you want them to feel a certain way, and that's what the business is doing when we take a client."

She makes sure Jacobs + Interiors fits her clients' needs, and vice versa, to ensure a successful — and, yes, fun — outcome. Through a series of conversations, the team assesses how clients use their homes, tapping into every detail from where coats will go in entryways to entertaining, and even planning rooms for future family members, be it children or grandchildren.

"There's a whole list of lifestyle questions that we ask, and once we get through that,

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Vail

we get a clear picture,” she says.

Together, the team builds at least one — if not a few — vision boards based on photos from the client. These boards organize ideas in a cohesive manner and often present various options, from modern to eclectic, so that the final project turns out to be everything the client dreamed of. The planning process also includes designers offering their knowledge and suggestions about possible opportunities, which clients are often unaware of, in order to enhance the design.

“Yvonne has a very real ease with clients that I love watching,” says senior interior designer Katherine Gallagher, who has worked at Jacobs + Interiors for over five years. “I’ve learned a lot from her, watching her interacting with the clients. She can balance letting her opinions be known (with her clients’ ideas). She’s able to really gain their trust, and then that builds and turns into a great project, where the home is perfectly catered to the client.”



*For this Strawberry Park remodel, one of the objectives was to retain the charm of the log home and existing river rock fireplace. Yvonne Jacobs and Kristin Cencello worked with Mikal Otten from Exquisite Kitchen Design on the bar and kitchen. The project was a finalist in the Sub-Zero Awards.*



*In this remodel, the guest room includes gorgeous wood paneling by Arrigoni Woods on the fireplace wall. Creamy suede covers the rest of the walls.*

The process, which inevitably includes challenges, naturally forges a close bond between clients and the team.

“We’re always trying to manage expectations of what can be done,” Jacobs says, explaining how she tells clients that issues she can’t foresee in the beginning are going to pop up, but they will work through them together to find the best solution.

She encourages not just communication, but over communication “and not keeping anything in, because I think when you keep it in, it festers, and then it gets worse and worse — it feels that way, anyway,” she says.

She understands that building or remodeling a home, although exciting, also can be a stressful, daunting and emotional process. For example, one project, which began as a remodel but ultimately ended in a complete demolition and rebuild, triggered a lot of



doesn't ship something, something comes in broken. It's just a constant."

But whatever happens, she views all of the professionals she works with as a tribe, all pulling together for the greater good.

"I am a very team-orientated person, and I will never throw anyone under the bus — if something goes wrong, we are all accountable on the same level, and when things are great, everyone gets credit," she says.

Gallagher is just one of the professionals who appreciates her fair and upbeat approach.

"You can really tell everyone on the team wants to do great work and loves design. She takes a lot of high care in each employee's growth. She does put as much care into employees as she does each and every client," Gallagher says. "She also allows you a lot of freedom and opportunities within the company to build your strength."

For Jacobs, cultivating a positive work culture includes one-on-one meetings with each member, fostering team spirit by celebrating birthdays and other milestones together and gathering for fun activities outside of work, including shopping trips to Denver.

"We are like a little family. I know if people have to work every day and see each other daily, we're going to make it the best environment, and we're going to have the best kind of people that vibe together. We're always sending each other new, exciting things, like 'Oh, look at this cool door system that opens up to a whole patio, or look at this new faucet.' We're just constantly inspiring each other," she says. "We all have certain skills that complement each other. We are all willing to help each other out and are always lifting each other up."

"She has an amazing team —

they are such a cohesive group of people," says Kara Levine, Edwards showroom manager for Decorative Materials. "She has a beautiful eye, and she really listens to the homeowners. She customizes her designs for each person she's working with, and you can see that in how much she puts into it and how they vary from project to project. She's not just looking online. She truly comes up with her own creative designs. And, she's so casual while still being professional."

The scale of projects Jacobs + Interiors works on, from high-end homes in beachy Florida or big-city New York to its bread-and-butter luxury mountain homes is a testament to her reputation — and the strong word-of-mouth she has built, Gallagher says.

Last year, Luxe Interiors + Design and Sub-Zero, Wolf and Cove named Jacobs a 2024 Design Icon. Only 12 designers in the entire

emotion in the clients when they decided to tear down their home.


"I learned to be more empathetic and have a very open heart and mind. The client needed to talk through it in a way I had not done before. We all got through it, and the result was an amazing home for their family. This taught me so much, and I am grateful for that opportunity," she says.

She extends her mediation, listening and honest communication skills to general contractors, architects and a host of other professionals with whom she collaborates.

"The coordination level is huge," she says. "I can't even remember a day in this job where I have not had to troubleshoot something or solve a problem. I don't even think of it as a challenge anymore. I think of it like an opportunity. You really have to turn it around in your mind because this job is so challenging in that way. There are just too many details that fall through — the vendor

*This bathroom from a project in Bachelor Gulch won a Crystal Award for Best Bathroom Remodel at the 2023 ASID Crystal Awards.*



A woman with shoulder-length brown hair, wearing a white blazer and white pants, stands against a dark, vertically-slatted background. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is wearing a gold necklace and small hoop earrings. Her right hand is in her pocket.

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*When Yvonne Jacobs started her own design firm she worked out of her house. Within a year, it was apparent she needed a dedicated commercial space to accommodate the sheer volume of projects.*

PHOTO BY BRENT BINGHAM

nation achieved the recognition for their kitchen designs.

“As the largest residential architecture and design brand deeply rooted in major markets across the country, Luxe is proud to celebrate our rich relationships with incredible local interior design talent,” says Kate Kelly Smith, EVP and managing director of “Luxe Interiors + Design,” in a press release.

Jacobs was honored — and amazed — to be included with all of the other distinguished designers.

“You kind of go through life and you think, ‘Oh I’ve accomplished this. I’ve accomplished that,’ but you don’t really take the time to recognize these things. And when that happened, I stood back and said, ‘Wow, I did accomplish all these things, and I feel really proud,’” she says.

From luxury homes to resort condos, her eye for design has transformed a vast array of spaces. For example, two years ago, she completed a stunning remodel on a project called Tall Timbers.

“When we walked into the house, it looked like an old country club with so much red wood and green carpet,” she says, noting that the transformation was unbelievable. “It is so beautiful and light. It was an 8,000-square-foot house, and we touched every inch of it.”

Another project involved an award-winning new build, which highlighted Estes Park’s mountain scenery.

“It’s this beautiful, majestic house with a very modern structure,” she says.

But she doesn’t limit her talent to luxury residences. She also uses her resources to aid people rebuilding their lives after experiencing domestic violence or sexual assault.

## COMMUNITY ASSET

For 16 years, she has served on the board of the Bright Future Foundation, which administers Eagle County’s only 24/7 crisis line. The nonprofit provides confidential support and referral services, as well as housing and a buddy program based on the

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national Big Brother/Big Sister model of mentorship.

“She has the same enthusiasm as a board member as when she began. She is just always so positive, and that is such an important factor for a board because all nonprofits, we go through our funding ups and downs,” says Sheri Mintz, chief executive officer of Bright Future Foundation. “She really gives back in so many ways.”

Jacobs still maintains a relationship with her junior buddy, whom the foundation paired her with when the youngster was about 8 — and is now a college graduate.

“That’s one of the most important things any of our volunteers can do, is give of themselves and give of their families to a kid that needs that help,” Mintz says.

Jacobs and her team also design homes for Bright Future clients placed in permanent housing. Their interior design clients sometimes donate used furniture to the Bright Future Foundation after a remodel, and White Horse Solutions stores it until it’s needed.

“They come in and totally outfit the house for them, everything from the furniture to the bedding to the kitchen supplies,” Mintz says. “It’s really something out of a TV show; it’s just so amazing. Usually clients are so overwhelmed, they don’t even know how to thank us and Jacobs + Interiors enough.”

The nonprofit’s clients aren’t the only ones who benefit.

“It’s such a special experience. You walk away feeling really great to be able to help someone,” Gallagher says, adding that design clients also appreciate the program, knowing that their former furnishings will be put to good use.

“Everyone deserves a beautiful home. It’s a place of comfort, a

gathering place for your family and a place for you to be inspired,” Jacobs says. “I realize we are not saving lives over here, but design, when done right, can make a difference. Every month or so, we have a small installation for someone that has nothing. We say it’s ‘design on a dime,’ but it’s all from free donations, and those are the most heartwarming installations we have.”

Bright Futures is just one of the many nonprofits Jacobs supports because, as she points out, there are a lot more people in the community who need the resource than it seems.

“It’s not always who you think it is. It’s all shapes and forms of people in life,” she says about the nonprofit’s clients. “When I learned about the organization, I was just blown away by what they do and how they help people. I want to serve. I don’t want to be a bystander.”

She also contributes to the Education Foundation of Eagle County (EFEC), which supports students’ intellectual and emotional growth by focusing on in-school enrichment, mental health services and retaining top teacher talent. EFEC hosts Project Funway, a fabric-less, fundraising fashion show, for which she served as a judge this year. Additionally, she is a member of Women’s Impact Network (WIN) of Eagle County, which began in 2021 to support high school seniors to pursue career goals through scholarships. Each WIN member commits to donating \$1,000 annually to fund the scholarships.

“Yvonne is obviously such a talented business woman and a talented designer, but she’s also such an incredibly giving, caring person,” Mintz says.

Given her profound connection to community, it seems fitting that Jacobs spent her formative years in Pueblo, a town named after the Spanish word for both “village” and “people” — two aspects she cherishes in life.

“I’m close to being 30 years in the Vail Valley, and I cannot imagine a better place to live. I’ve raised my kids here. They’ve gone to the schools here, and, you know, with no family living here, this *is* your family. A lot of people come to the mountains, and they don’t have close family ties near, so you sort of make your own family here. Everybody here is just very close in that way. I’ve made some of my best friends here.”

That includes women who have supported her through her parenting years, as well as getting older.

“It is a community of women and people that are just there for each other,” she says. “This little mountain town does a lot for the soul.”

And, she has done a lot for this “little mountain town.”

“Everyone loves her. She’s such a ray of sunshine. She’s just so fun,” Levine says.

As a relatively new empty nester, she still enjoys skiing, hiking, biking and simply being in the mountains with her husband and friends. And, she still adores design.

“It’s just amazing how far she’s taken her business in such a short period of time,” Gallagher says.

Throughout the decades, she has built a solid — and repeat — client base, many of whom she worked with 15-20 years ago.

“It is really great to have continued, lifelong relationships like that, and the projects just get better and better. I have met some wonderful new clients, as well, and continue to grow my business,” she says. “I have always known I love design, but I did not count on how enjoyable it would be to run my own company. From very humble beginnings, I never dreamed I would be in the position I am now.”

It just goes to show how following a passion to improve others’ lives can make personal dreams come true, too. **vvm**