



# THE INNOVATORS

KBDN highlights **50** top innovators whose work, creative talents, business acumen and professionalism are currently leading the way for the industry and elevating the kitchen and bath trade.

— BY KBDN STAFF



The fast-changing nature of the kitchen and bath industry can be one of the greatest challenges for design professionals. Indeed, the near-constant evolution of products, materials, trends, technology and consumer preferences can be difficult to keep up with, no less ahead of. Yet many would argue that the excitement and energy that go with such a fast-changing industry are part of why so many talented, creative professionals are drawn to the field.

But while the best designers stay attuned to the latest trends and their clients' ever-evolving needs and desires, some take it just a little bit further. They don't just keep up, they lead the way. They set new courses for themselves and those around them, re-inventing and re-imagining colors, spaces and technological innovations, and ultimately changing the way the art and business of design are conducted. And in doing so, they shape not just the spaces they envision and create, but the industry as a whole.

Innovators come from all avenues of the design world, and they are the lifeblood of the kitchen and bath industry. For that reason, *Kitchen & Bath Design News* is proud to present its third annual Top 50 Innovators list, honoring kitchen and bath professionals who have won the respect of their peers and the industry at large through their creative talents, leadership skills, business acumen, community involvement and professionalism (see related Editorial, Page 5).

Nominated by industry professionals and then reviewed by the *KBDN* nominating committee, the 2019 Innovators reflect a diverse cross section of the industry, from technology experts, aging-in-place specialists and design authors to cutting-edge marketers, top-tier educators, business gurus and more. Whether creating unique podcasts or re-imagining design for universal appeal, these kitchen and bath pros are advancing the industry and providing inspiration not only for their clients and peers, but for future generations to come.

Some are long-time veterans who have made a career of advancing the art and business of design, while others are relatively new to the industry, using their passion to transform the industry through new avenues like social media marketing, sustainability and technology.

Many are active in professional associations and their communities, raising the bar for the industry, even as they forge connections with consumers that transform not only their homes, but how they perceive the value of design.

Each comes from a different background, yet all understand that innovation is a calling, one that drives them to constantly strive for new, better and more efficient ways of understanding space, communicating their vision and creating designs that maximize the home's value, aesthetic appeal and functionality. They strive for excellence in business, design, education, technology and community service, and in doing so, they raise up the industry so that it remains ever changing, ever growing and ever improving.

On this and the following 12 pages, *KBDN* spotlights the 2019 Innovators – 50 outstanding kitchen and bath professionals who are changing the industry right now. ■

*Know someone who's a true innovator in the kitchen and bath industry? KBDN will begin accepting nominations for next year's Innovators on January 1, 2020. Visit [KitchenBathDesign.com](http://KitchenBathDesign.com) for further details.*

## Chris Awadalla

*Designer's diverse background, creative talents drive firm's success*



When Chris Awadalla founded Sanctuary Kitchen + Bath Design after working in the luxury kitchen and bath design field for over a decade, he already had a diverse professional background. From building and installing cabinets, framing kitchens, plumbing sinks and wiring electrical, he was well equipped to understand how a kitchen comes together.

A degree in information management and technology and four years working in mutual funds gave him a broad perspective, along with an appreciation for the balance needed to run a firm that requires both business and design savvy.

His tech background serves him well in his showroom, where he's utilized technology instead of costly showroom overhead to grow his firm into one of Denver's leading luxury design sources.

Awadalla began his career as an apprentice to a master carpenter in Connecticut who manufactured cabinets and performed installations for renowned interior designer Beverly Ellsley, a 2018 *KBDN* Innovator. He moved to Denver in 2009 where he took a job as a designer with Interior Intuitions, before starting his own business in 2014. Today, his firm collaborates with many of the state's most skilled architectural, design and build firms, both in the mountain communities and in metro Denver.

With a passion for creative design, he's already won numerous accolades, including Best of Houzz (four years in a row), 5 Under 40 Award 2019 by *Colorado Homes and Lifestyles* magazine, and Fabulous List 2017 by *Colorado Homes and Lifestyles* magazine.

## Bonnie Bagley Catlin

*Designer redefines West Coast design while serving community*



For 20 years, Bonnie Bagley Catlin has been working in the kitchen and bath industry.

She began her professional life in Portland, OR at Neil Kelly Company, later advancing her career through a move to the Seattle, WA office. In 2010, Catlin made the move to San Diego, CA, where she developed her distinctive California style.

She is currently principal and owner of Signature Designs Kitchen & Bath Interiors.

A Certified Aging-In-Place Specialist (CAPS) and Certified Interior Designer (CID), Catlin's portfolio includes large custom, whole-house remodels as well as over 500 kitchen and bath designs. She excels at creating visual interest by layering textures, patterns and color into clients' surroundings that are highly functional, distinctive and refreshingly unique.

Her work has been showcased in dozens of print and online publications, including the HGTV blog, *Modern Luxury*, *San Diego Union Tribune* and *Seattle Magazine*. She was honored this year by *Kitchen & Bath Design News* with the Bronze award for Best Kitchen, \$150K to \$225K division, and has been awarded best of Houzz nine times. In 2018, she was the winner of the website's 10 Best Bathroom award.

Catlin also shares her talents with those in need. While in Seattle, she worked with Angel Helper, partnering with another interior designer, fundraising for single-mother home makeovers. In San Diego, she chaired the ASID Kitchen Bath Tour in 2017. She also works with design students, giving entrepreneurial guidance in social media development.

# THE INNOVATORS

## Rosella Gonzalez

*Designer views clients as creative partners*



For San Diego-based designer Rosella Gonzalez, a successful design should encapsulate a harmonious, three-dimensional blend of not only the clients' needs and lifestyle, but also their culture and personality. Drawing on her background in architecture, Gonzalez works to cultivate what she refers to as "creative partnerships" with her clients, accompanying them on a design journey

that culminates in a sculptural, deeply personal product. For Gonzalez, this approach begins first and foremost with clear communication, close observation and an exploratory spirit. She considers herself a 'medium' for her clients, translating their expressed wants into beautiful, functional designs.

This approach has drawn plenty of attention, both regionally and nationally, as Gonzalez has, over the course of her 15 years of design experience, racked up an impressive 17 awards, and her work has been honored by NARI, the CotY Awards, the NKBA, ASID and the Chrysalis Awards, among others.

Gonzalez's pursuit of creative partnerships extends well beyond her work with clients: she also places a great deal of value on creative relationships within her community. Gonzalez frequently makes the trip to an orphanage in Tijuana in order to participate in a project called "El Arte alimenta - art nourishes," an art education program that endeavors to nurture artistic and creative development in under-served children and teenagers.

## Gloria Graham Sollecito

*The combination of art and design delivers inspired style*



Artful Kitchens, West Palm Beach, FL native Gloria Graham Sollecito's business, allows her to draw on the surroundings of the beautiful beaches and ocean landscape, yet explore the opulent and more exotic elements of style. The kitchen and bath designer believes that function is the foundation of design, beauty comes next, and the art is getting the combination right. Her work combines her love of art and her love of design.

Graham Sollecito studied interior design and became a full-time design assistant, progressing to the kitchen and bath design segment with a concentration in cabinetry. During that period, the AKBD-accredited designer learned the intricacies of cabinet construction as well as how to design using imported traditional cabinetry and European cabinetry. She was design assistant to the late Malcolm Thomas, becoming known to his clients and moving into his position upon his relocation to Arizona.

The co-author of *The Complete Idiots Guide to Remodeling Your Kitchen, Illustrated* as well as a freelance writer contributing to the *Sun Sentinel* about kitchen design, Graham Sollecito has had work showcased on "This Old House" as well as in *Florida Design Magazine* and the *Palm Beach Post*, and recognized in 2017 and 2018 Best of Houzz. She was named one of the top 50 design influencers for 2018 by Modenus, and is a member of the Blanco Design Council. She has also served on the South Florida NKBA Chapter's Board of Directors as v.p. of communications.

## Eric Goranson

*Home improvement expert shares knowledge over the airwaves*



Spreading awareness about design and remodeling can be done in a variety of ways, and Eric Goranson, CKD, is tackling as many as he can. A fixture in the Pacific Northwest design community, Goranson's voice is well known to people in his area.

During his 25-year career as a kitchen and bath design/sales professional, Goranson has completed over 1,000 kitchens. Several years ago, he decided to take to the airwaves to assist others with tackling their renovation goals.

As the region's home improvement expert, Goranson shares his insights on radio and television programs. He is segment contributor for "MORE DIY," which is featured each week on the "MORE Good Day Oregon" morning show on Fox 12 in Portland, OR and Meredith television stations nationwide. He is also the host of "Around the House with Eric G," which is broadcast nationally on the Envision Radio Network and is available as a podcast.

Goranson is also educating other professionals with seminars on evolving technology in kitchen and bath design and construction, with subjects including emerging technology with Virtual Reality Design and smart-home integration. He is doing this through the National Kitchen & Bath Association and the National Association of Home Builders.

In 2017, the designer was inducted into the Baldwin Design Council for a two-year term, collaborating with architects and designers on design trends for Baldwin Hardware.

## Amy Hart

*Designer fosters customer-centric culture*



Many design firms profess to put the client first, but Amy Hart, owner of Charlottesville, VA firm Dovetail Design & Cabinetry, stands a head above the rest. Hart, who began her career in 1991 as a Facilities Design Intern with Eastern Michigan University's Interior Design program, has constructed her business model around the idea of saying 'yes' to her clients where other firms might say 'no.'

Hart is always willing to take a good hard look at design 'guidelines' - in terms of space planning, textures, technology and color palettes - that might be overdone or outdated, which allows her to start every design with fresh eyes and foster a true creative partnership with her clients. She is also dedicated to investing in software to make her team as efficient as possible and stay up to date on client touchpoints. Her background in interior design, along with a collaborative team of professionals, enables her to offer full-service design packages, including cabinetry, interior architecture, décor, furnishings and electrical plans. With two showrooms in Charlottesville and Staunton, VA, Dovetail Design & Cabinetry is a 'one-stop shop' for clients.

Hart is also an active voice within the design community locally and nationally, with memberships in the American Society of Interior Designers, the Blue Ridge Home Builders Association and the Blue Ridge Women's Council of Realtors. She also holds a position on the Wellborn Cabinet Design Council.

# THE INNOVATORS

## Erica Islas

*Designer pays it forward with charitable endeavors*



Although Erica Islas's career as a professional designer began in 1994 with her first position at an interior design firm, her love for design and remodeling began far earlier. From playing with a Crayola interior design drafting kit at age 10 to spending time on jobsites with her family's general contracting business, Islas absorbed design and construction almost via osmosis. Fast forward to 2000, when Islas finally

opened her own design firm, Los Angeles-based

EMI Interior Design – where she pursues both her passion for design and her desire to pay it forward.

Islas favors a modernist design flavor, with a function-first approach. She is always eager to tackle a challenge, from overhauling small, previously unusable spaces to full-home renovations. Her design efforts are not limited to her paying clients, however – Islas has also participated in pro bono work for those in need, most notably participating in a 2010 project to remodel the new Upward Bound House Family Shelter, a former budget motel. The effort, which enlisted the services of 16 designers, took place over the course of two weeks, and, when complete, could house four families at a time for three-month periods.

Over the years, Islas' work has garnered plenty of attention from publications and brands alike, with a shelf of awards including Viking's Kitchen Design of the Year and coverage in *Architectural Digest*. Her work has also appeared on HGTV, and her charitable work has been featured in *The Los Angeles Times*.

## Susan Jamieson

*Designer shines with project and product design*



Susan Jamieson makes a splash wherever she goes. The award-winning product and interior designer is a professional powerhouse:

She's been nominated for Southeastern Designer of the Year, selected by *Southern Living* and *Coastal Living* magazines as Virginia's "go to" designer, and her designs and advice have been featured in national publications including *Architectural Digest*, *Coastal Living*, *ELLE Décor*, *House Beautiful*, *Southern Living*, *Traditional Home* and *Veranda*.

With degrees in Art History and Interior Design, Jamieson effortlessly curates styles, periods and materials to create highly personalized spaces.

Jamieson was a DXV National Campaign Designer in 2016/2017, and is a recognized color expert who formulated each color in her line of 200 Bridget Beari Colors paints.

A believer in giving back, she donates a portion of all proceeds from both her Bridget Beari Colors paints and her Bridget Beari Papers wall-paper collections to animal care and rescue organizations. (Bridget and Beari were her Shar-Pei pup rescues, and all of her products are named after the pets of friends and family.) She also recently opened Bridget Beari Home Store in Richmond, VA, where she offers complimentary workshops for the community.

Jamieson donated all interior paint for the 2018 Designer Show House benefiting Richmond Symphony Orchestra, and received Richmond's 'Woman of the Year for the Arts' award for launching the city's largest outdoor exhibit, raising over \$300,000 for charities, including Cancer Research.

## Todd Jackson

*Dual marketing strategy creates kitchen and bath powerhouse*



Todd Jackson has been intensely focused on building a successful design and remodeling business from the very beginning of his career. He entered the remodeling field at the age of 20 and became a licensed general contractor at age 23. In 1989, he founded Jackson Design and Remodeling, which today numbers 62 employees who last year completed 78 projects on \$21.3 million in revenue.

The firm specializes in kitchens and baths, but also completes room additions and whole-house remodeling projects around the San Diego area. His design team, led by previous *KBDN* Innovator Tatiana Machado-Rosas, has won a number design excellence awards from *KBDN* and other organizations.

As Jackson Design and Remodeling has grown, the firm opened an impressive design showroom that was backed by a marketing campaign positioning the firm at the very upper end of the market. Realizing that some potential clients did not approach his company for work because of the high-end, high-price perception, Jackson opened a second showroom and company next door, Home Expressions by JDR. This company showroom and division was positioned as more approachable and value-driven. The reality is that both company showrooms offer design solutions while attracting a wider base of potential customers. As a result of his bold marketing and business decision making, Jackson's company is growing dynamically with more growth expected to come in the future.

## Grace Jeffers

*Historic projects and entrepreneurial spirit drive designer's success*



Grace Jeffers is an esteemed design historian who focuses exclusively on materials. A graduate of the Bard Graduate Center, Jeffers considers the "big picture" of design. Her approach blends material science with social history, art history and design practice. She teaches people how to think differently about design.

Jeffers has become an innovative designer of patterns for paper, flooring, laminate and a range of other decorative surfacing materials, working for over 10 different major manufacturers, including NASA, Burberry and Airstream. Since 2014 she has presented "Manmade Natural" – her AIA, ASID and IIDEC approved lecture – about the authenticity of materials across the U.S.

Jeffers' led the restoration of the Ralph and Sunny Wilson House in Temple, TX, for which she received the Merit Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She is also the creative force for The Wilsonart Challenges Chair Competition. Now in its 16th year, the competition works with a design college to create and make a short list of winning chairs that are exhibited at ICFF each May in New York.

A passionate writer on materials, Jeffers has served as a contributor and design editor to magazines such as *Interior Design* and *Surface* for over 17 years, and has written over 400 articles about design, materials and design history. Whether teaching, lecturing, designing or writing, Jeffers questions preconceptions about design and gives her audience a new framework with which to consider the material world.