



A Life In Design

MATT AND HEATHER FRENCH

By Lori Swartz



I must confess, I am a long-time rabid fan of good design. I was brought up without art. There was love, conversation and books, but no art. In our home we had useful things: a toaster, a broom and proper grammar. We moved a lot and art takes up space. As an adult, art is my love affair with adventure. Art is indifferent to time and can stand up to interrogation...and sometimes, if you are lucky, it can bowl you over with one glance. This brings me to Heather and Matt French.

Heather and Matt have created an interior design business that revolves around art being the everyday. For them, art is about creating beautiful spaces. Heather admits that people might think she is crazy, but she says that beauty and things actually do matter. "Yeah, yeah, I know they aren't supposed to, but while it's not the end all be all, I believe that it's a starting point." Through French and French interior design, Matt and Heather help their clients surround themselves with things that hold memory, meaning and inspiration. Inspiration is what it's all about. They encourage their clients to have things in their lives that support those feelings.

For them, Madrid is home. Home has so many associated cliches. Home is where the heart is...home is where you hang your hat...home sweet home...there is no place like home...when the chickens come home to roost...until the cows come home...and on and on. "Connection to community is the key to happiness," says Matt. This is our wealth in Madrid, we are rich with moments. "When I go to the general store it can take two hours, I talk to everyone I see." Which one of us in Madrid hasn't had that experience? Budget two hours for a trip to buy bread.

Matt mentions growing up in Alabama, "I was in towns similar

to Madrid, but with water. Highway 14 is like a river running through Madrid." Yes, and it brings us flotsam, jetsam and beautiful things.

Heather and Matt explore what is important to their clients. Heather says, "For me, homes are about family, the soft spot you land, the place memories are created. Home tells your story. Each object in it is a connection to a memory, and most importantly, the people and places that helped create that memory." Matt agrees, "Design is linked with quality of life. Good design could cure half of what ails people. Intent and energy are in everything you touch."

Heather and Matt seem to throw themselves into things. They are even talking about getting bees and chickens in the Spring. Matt says that his years of growing up around an eclectic band of barefoot inventors and grandiose storytellers encouraged him to have a little bit of art in everything he does. For Heather, art is the everyday. "I get so inspired to be able to create, to get to know and understand my clients definition of beauty versus my own and to create from that joint perspective." For Heather, art is about intent and the emotion that it evokes.

Heather comes from a background of Oriental Medicine and massage, Matt from skateboard culture and construction. Their



match works beautifully. "We have been together for 20 years, so there is nothing new annoying us about each other." (I love his honesty.) "We work together really well. We know our strengths and weakness. We keep it as light as possible." There are endless versions of war, but only one version of peace and it seems that as a couple they have found it.

They are both inspired by art. Matt looks to other artists, the freaks, the counterculture, the no-brow and low-brow. Heather says, "I love people doing what they do at the highest level, because they are meant to do it, because they love it! I watch the process of someone coming into greatness, the commitment, drive, the pure obsession. Whether it's my kid learning something or watching someone become a successful artist or business owner, that level of commitment and drive always inspires me."

French and French Interiors has been described as having a good eye. "Design matters," says Heather "If you think something is beautiful, if you feel good in the home you live in, then you want to be there. You want to create there. If you put the effort into designing something, whether that be a painting, a sculpture, a room (which is my medium), it shows." Yes, art has power over us.

They have also started to do pop-up shows. They curate a collection of goods grounded in stories and meaning, functional beautiful items, made with plain old good design. Both nostalgic and modern, local and global, they have an eye for rare finds that are one-of-a-kind and made by hand by artisans whose story they



tell. Follow the journey, because after all, the journey is the destination.

It is all connected. Space. Light. Intention. Ideas. Matt talks about how he believes that every particle is interacting with every other particle. Good design affects us. "There is this giant equilibrium going on," he says. Matt's words make me think of Chaos Theory. The Butterfly Effect. This effect grants the power to cause a hurricane in Haiti by a butterfly flapping its wings in New Mexico. It may take a very long time, but the connection is real. If the butterfly had not flapped its wings at just the right moment, the hurricane would not have happened. It is all about moments. Feedback. Connection.

Not everyone needs to be good at everything. If you find yourself stumped at how to create a home that reflects your inspiration, check them out at www.frenchandfrenchinteriors.com

They have an amazing studio on Manhattan Street in Santa Fe.

Check that out too!

How much can you imagine? It is up to you. You imagine. They create.

