

BOLD GRAPHICS

# GREAT LAKES BY DESIGN



## Service d'or

For gentleman designer, Shane D. Inman, president and senior principal designer of The Inman Company, interior design is an inspired lifestyle where he lives for his clients and their luxury, detailed projects.



# Service d'or

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In recent years, interior design has taken its turn on the proverbial stage sparking a creative and inspired revolution when it comes to the look and feel of spaces—residential and commercial—for the general population. However, beyond the glitz and glam that has too often come to define the meticulous field of study, interior design was founded upon theory-based design and human behavioral research. Each decision throughout the process, from initial conceptual planning and execution of construction to finished materials, is backed by evidence-based methodologies to ensure design solutions not only adhere to a myriad of technical code and safety standards, but also are holistic, creative, and contextually appropriate for the project—ultimately supporting client lifestyle or brand.

To some, interior design is a muse, an aspirational field to explore given the time; while to others, it is a dedicated vocational pursuit, requiring years of continued education, expertise, and passionate craft. For Shane D. Inman, president and senior principal designer at The Inman Company in Traverse City, Michigan—with past offices in Miami Beach, Chicago, and Manhattan—interior design is an inspired lifestyle, and one that defines and informs the very work he delivers to his clients.

“I love absolutely everything about interior design,” Inman said. “I am the best version of myself when I’m with a client. I love being able to show my expertise and all my hard years of learning and manipulating this career. I love it.”

The Inman Company is a national and international interior design firm specializing in both residential and commercial work with a nearly two-decade-long history of delivering projects and spaces that combine beautiful form with uncompromising function. Inman, who admittedly has an affinity for the finer workings of AutoCAD, has also



built a relationship-driven approach to each project by taking the concept of “customer service” to the next level.

“I am very particular about the client I serve, and I say ‘serve,’ because I am a servant. This is how I have made my success: I do everything for my client,” Inman said. “Everyone likes to throw around the word ‘customer service,’ but I am client-centric. I have forfeited personal relationships, my weekends, and my holidays; it is all devoted to my clients. Their wish is my absolute command; there is nothing I don’t do and I do everything immediately.”

Before Inman built a successful career working with celebrity, A-List clientele, and corporate clients across the country and the global landscape, building a robust portfolio throughout the years of traditional, transitional, contemporary, and commercial spaces; the Lake City, Michigan-native began his foray into the interior design field when he attended Michigan State University in Lansing, Michigan. Armed with a bachelor’s degree in interior design upon graduation, Inman set his sights on San Francisco, California where he spent time working at Home Depot when the franchise was about 30-stores strong and had just begun invest-

ing in its customer service program. Inman quickly then became one of the youngest directors of design for Home Depot’s Expo Design Center when he was transferred to the Miami Beach, Florida location.

“I walked out the doors with my diploma and didn’t even know what interior design was; I didn’t have any idea,” Inman said. “So, I started work at the Home Depot in San Francisco, which is where I moved after college.”

For the next several years, Inman oversaw and managed the launch of new Expo Design Centers, roughly 200,000 square-feet in size, in different locations—and states—with a team of about 20 employees. By his early 30s, though, Inman was ready for a change and headed to Africa with the Peace Corps where he taught English as a Foreign Language and AutoCAD. It was upon returning to the Traverse City region nearly 15 years ago that he decided to start his own interior design firm known as The Inman Company, bringing with him a unique background and experience in service, combined with a knowledge of interior design as he went on to become a certified interior designer by the National Council for Interior Design Qualification and a Certified Kitch-

en Designer by the National Kitchen & Bath Association.

“Interior design is becoming such an important profession, because it stands on health, welfare, and safety. You need to know the coefficient of friction of a tile that you put in the lobby of a commercial building and it is this knowledge that is getting you hired by the builder, the general contractor, and the developer. When somebody falls, you are liable,” Inman said.

“We have to know regulations, federal code, state code, city code, township code; it is incredible what we have to know and then you can take your interior design degree further, which I did, and become a Certified Kitchen Designer by the National Kitchen and Bath Association. So, when a client hires me, they hire me, because I can do their entire home,” Inman added.

Inman’s tailored, individual approach to each interior design project has led to an exclusive high-net-worth private residential clientele base and collaboration with notable commercial brands such as Pottery Barn, HGTV, Houzz, Chicago Tribune, and Mercedes-Benz. His understanding of brand identity and its importance to companies in terms of awareness and education through





the use of intentional interior design has also led to his company working on commercial projects with businesses, like Hagerty Insurance, Benjamin Moore Paints, Grand Traverse Resort, LochenHeath Golf Club, and Traverse City Film Festival.

Inman said for his residential clients, he is usually tasked with working on their second or third home and travels all over the United States, as well as internationally, for them.

“It is not about money; it is about mindset. Yes, my clients are all ultra-high-net-worth, but not all of them. I’ve had clients for 20 years, since I’ve started and they want things done right the first time and they want things done on time. Not everybody can do that,” Inman said.

“I do the whole home from the ground up: I design the entire home—the kitchens, the bathrooms, the libraries, the living rooms, the fireplaces, and the laundry rooms, you name it—and then I work with the general contractor, get it all done, and then I fit-to-finish,” Inman added.

His is a process that integrates ergonomic and anthropometric planning, builds on spatial relationships among designated spaces and furnishings, and incorporates budgets, cost comparison analyses, flowcharts, and AutoCAD as he works with clients, both residential and commercial, to deliver their dream project.

“The ergonomics, the anthropometrics,

the spatial relations: it is all super important on how the space is going to function,” Inman said. “You could put in the best desk in the office, but if you can’t walk around it correctly, it didn’t work. You have to plan out everything. It is the planning—the blueprint stages—that would be the number one key to interior design.”

Inman also noted lighting is one of the most important aspects of interior design, which is something he puts a lot of emphasis on as he curates sconces, pendants, and other lighting options to use in unexpected ways, and there are really no rules to interior design anymore since they have all been broken. Whether a client wants contemporary, modern, traditional, transitional, Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired, or Asian-influenced, the importance is to have a thread of uniformity throughout and that clients know the importance is on the feeling created throughout the space rather than what anyone else may think.

“Everyone should feel welcome and comfortable, and they love that,” Inman said. “So, we create that feeling they want, we put a name to it, and that is how all of the decisions throughout the project are based—and you have to hold them accountable. If they say they like gold and they don’t like silver, but they come back with a silver desk, you’re like ‘wait, you told me you don’t like silver.’ Honesty is very important.”

Though his attention to detail—cal-

culated spreadsheets—and client-centric approach to projects remains the same regardless of size and style, Inman noted the process does change slightly when considering the nuanced differences between residential and commercial typologies. For residential clients, it is all about family lifestyle and considering things that will influence the final design of the home, such as resale value, upsizing versus downsizing, aging-in-place, and entertaining; while commercial clients is all about showcasing its brand.

“I do 50 percent commercial work. It does change, because when I am brought in on a commercial capacity, it is about brand identity. It is about awareness and it is about education,” Inman said. “When you own a business, you have to be very aware of your corporate identity, your brand recognition, and the most important thing is how you are educating the people in and outside of your office.”

Inman also noted while a potential customer or end-user in a commercial space could pick up a brochure to learn more about the company, the space—lobby or office—can teach people just as, or even more so, effectively about the culture and team through philanthropic endeavors, accolades, and position in the community through a well-designed interior.

“I help [my commercial clients] understand this; I help them understand that like in a medical practice, most people don’t real-







ly care if a doctor is from Harvard, but if that same doctor was with Doctors Without Borders for seven years, now that is a big deal,” Inman said. “These are the things I help shed light on: what the population would be very interested in. Hypothetically speaking, when I’m sitting there for an eye exam, it would be really nice to know that you have the latest-and-greatest glaucoma testing. This is the time to educate them.”

For Inman, design, particularly interior design, is a quality of life that is meant to support the functions of everyday life and empower client wellbeing and lifestyle, from

something as simple as a pen with that perfect ink stroke, to a favorite piece of inspired artwork hanging on the wall. Yet, as the public and client become more design-savvy, interior designer and interior decorator have become almost interchangeable and while both professions are needed, it is important for clients to know the differences, according to Inman.

“We are obsessed with interior design and just because somebody puts a room together amazingly by Target—which I can do and I’m a huge shopper at Target, I love it—doesn’t make you an interior designer, it

makes you a decorator and what we have to get to in the place of our design world is understanding what you are offering,” Inman said. “When you hire an interior designer or decorator, it is all about personality and it is all about relationship.”

Throughout the years, The Inman Company has not only invested in its clients, but also in charitable causes at the local, national, and international level. From volunteering at the Chicago House, a social service organization supporting the LGBTQ community and those impacted by HIV and AIDS in Chicago; God’s Love We Deliver



in New York City, an organization preparing and delivering high-quality meals to people unable to provide or prepare it for themselves due to illness; and contributing to the Third Level Crisis Center in Traverse City for the last 10 years, Inman noted he takes great pride in giving back and doing an enormous amount of volunteer work. He has also been involved with hurricane relief efforts for Puerto Rico, Salvation Army, Munson Medical Center, and pro-bono work for the Traverse City Film Festival and Traverse City Symphony Orchestra.

“I do a lot of pro-bono work and I also

gave away a \$35,000 kitchen with Ugly Kitchen Contest at the beginning of my career,” Inman said. “I came from nothing, I’ve made success—whatever anyone’s version of success is—and I take pride in giving back and helping the less fortunate, because I remember where I came from.”

While design has become a lifelong passion—and vocation—for Inman, at the end of the day he never loses sight of his clients and loves the team collaboration and involvement throughout the process.

“I live for my clients. I live for the project. I die on the sword over the details,” Inman

said. “When I was in my 30s and I could work all day, I loved what I did so much that it just drove me and fueled me. Now, I work for these luxury projects that I get to hand-pick and it is much more fun, because they are larger, they are more involved, and the team is involved. I love collaboration. It is spectacular. The bigger the project, the more I thrive.”