



Husband and wife team James and Kricken Yaker's passion for design has been indelibly informed through their travels, having lived in Italy, New York and Los Angeles. Organic contemporary is the Yakers' signature blueprint – open-plan living spaces where rooms breathe life into one another and a talent for capturing natural light. Opening Vanillawood, a one stop design/build studio and showroom in 2007, it has become an immediate favorite of both locals and out-of-towners, establishing itself as the go-to source for iconic style. The shop houses a tight edit, the vibe is gutsy, with contemporary pieces and bold color playing against graphic patterns, all softened by organic sensibility. The result: a destination for shoppers who expect the unexpected.

Vanillawood is located in the Pearl District at 1238 NW Glisan Street, Portland OR www.vanillawood.com



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Shop Talk

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH VANILLAWOOD'S JAMES AND KRICKEN YAKER KNOWN FOR THEIR INTERPRETATION OF URBAN ORGANIC + GUTSY, GO-TO STYLE

Q: Where have you lived?

VANILLAWOOD: I'm a native of Portland and James is from NYC. We met in college studying abroad in Florence, Italy where we were studying art history, Italian architecture, cinema and Italian. We travelled every weekend by train to any country or city we could explore. We said goodbye in Greece, not knowing what would happen as we returned to the states on opposite coasts. That separation didn't last long, on a visit to Portland, James abandoned his plans in NYC and joined me in Portland for the summer. Rest is history, and we have since lived in New York, LA, a few months in Italy and now Portland.

Q: How have these experiences influenced your design?

VANILLAWOOD: We bring a lot of the urban feel of New York with the relaxed lifestyle of LA (think flips and jeans) into our work. Any time one can get out and experience new places, see new things, how can it not influence you and change you? So many of our clients have lived elsewhere, overseas or have travelled there, so it gives us a perspective that naturally feeds into our designs.

Q: What's topping your inspiration boards right now?

VANILLAWOOD: Geometric wallpaper, bold, bright colors, lots of texture and new and interesting reclaimed wood.

Q: How do you define your design style?

VANILLAWOOD: Organic modern with a little touch of bling.

Q: What are some essential elements found in your style?

VANILLAWOOD: We are kind of mad for wallpaper, darkly painted houses – especially on the more traditional ones to pack on the drama, wood elements – whether it be a live edge table or use of reclaimed wood applied on vertical surfaces, stellar lighting – lighting is the jewelry of a space, white walls and great art, whether it be homemade or worth thousands. Livable and inviting spaces. Light and bright with pops of color. Inviting the outside in.

Q: Why Portland?

VANILLAWOOD: We actually moved to Portland 7 years ago specifically to start Vanillawood. We knew that we could bring a contemporary edge to the city that wasn't as established at the time. Portland is a city that really embraces and supports entrepreneurial start-ups. We wanted a better lifestyle for our boys, a slower pace and less traffic. We knew building this company was going to take a lot of work but we also wanted to be home for dinner with our kids and take them to school. Portland really allows you to do that in a way a lot of urban cities do not. We have so many clients moving here for the same reason, and a lot of them don't even have the draw of family to pull them here.

Q: Fill in the blank, When I'm in my studio I feel inspired.

Q: What's your absolute favorite color(s)?

KRICKEN: Hot pink. JAMES: White (if it's with wood accents).

How do you define your design style?

“Organic modern with a little touch of bling.”



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Shop Talk

JAMES + KRICKEN YAKER

Q: If you could peek inside the studio of any artist, musician, architect or designer whose would it be?

VANILLAWOOD: Really? Any? Jimi Hendrix, Rolling Stones, U2, Andy Warhol, can we keep going? For interiors and actually tangible – Kelly Wearstler, her work is very inspiring. I’m pretty sure she does not sleep.

Q: Where do you shop (find your) for inspiration?

VANILLAWOOD: Shopping – LA, NYC, online, Seattle, 1st Dibs, vintage shops. Inspiration – travelling, experience, really everywhere, magazines, online is a tremendous resource and has made our job a lot easier. Houzz is a great resource.

Q: What trends do you see in interior design today?

VANILLAWOOD: Fabrics that seem like they jumped from the runway, lines being blurred between commercial and residential – cross pollination, mixing metals and periods. The web has emboldened everyone to indulge their design passion and clients are well informed. A less is more approach to design, smaller spaces, more intimate.

Q: What’s your most treasured object? VANILLAWOOD: Our family.



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