

Designer Spotlight: William Jude Kranyak

William Jude Kranyak worked at Mecox barely long enough to be employee of the month. Still, when he recently walked into the Southampton store to exchange tables for a client, he was fondly remembered. Years ago he worked at Mecox for a few weeks before a freelance design project in Sag Harbor gained momentum and led to a full time job working for himself. Today, the Brooklyn-based designer's endeavors fall under the umbrella of [William Jude Designs](#), and his work can be seen everywhere from East Hampton to London, Antwerp and Casablanca. Accomplished and established, yet his career trajectory was anything but orthodox.

Kranyak is of the rare breed of people whose past is as fascinating as their present and whose future is full of potential—albeit far from predictable. Before moving to New York in 1998 to pursue a career in acting and voiceovers (something he still does when he finds the time), this former competitive skateboarder studied English literature and psychology—a field that can be closely linked with design. “Clients want to work with someone who has interpersonal skills, and sometimes you’re playing counselor,” admits Kranyak. “Occasionally I find myself mediating when I’m working with a couple. I like the dialogue and the collaboration required to come to a compromise and find a solution that please both parties—despite how different their design aesthetic is.”

Currently, Kranyak's favorite design trend is sustainability. He notes that a lot has changed since 10 years ago when the market had very little to offer in that realm and clients weren't as eco-conscious. “It's refreshing to know that the consumer's voice, accountability and initiative started a shift, and now there's a viable market and a strong presence for sustainable furnishings and home goods,” he says.

Home goods was how Kranyak got into the design industry in the first place. Prior to moving to New York he worked in retail at Anthropologie (the only location at that time) where he was eventually promoted to housewares and homewares manager. Many design books, feng shui studies and freelance projects later, Kranyak was a successful self-taught designer.

Today, he juggles a number of undertakings. A three-bedroom cottage in East Hampton, an apartment on Park Avenue and perhaps the most exciting, a new furniture collection with fellow Greenpoint designer Eric Slayton. “I’ve commissioned pieces from Eric over the years and I’ve always been drawn to his wabi-sabi design and philosophy.”

Even if you’re not familiar with this Japanese worldview, the way Kranyak describes how he and Slayton are incorporating its principles into their new line sounds enticing. He uses phrases like “embracing the natural cycle of change and decay,” “reflects micro details and illustrates connectivity,” “inspired by movement and the intricacy of lines that are in plain sight all around us” and “that dynamic push and pull of life—tension between what’s fluid and what’s solid.”

The combination of materials in their collection is unexpected. Picture amorphous cut glass or subtly patinaed finishes that breath lightness mixed with solid, strong foundations. Envision loose references to Paul Evans’ cityscape stalagmite tables and the slender lines of Giacometti’s hand sculptures. All of their designs are already mapped out, prototypes are being built in Brooklyn, and at the moment, all that’s left to do is name the company. The plan is to present the collection next spring at shows like ICFF, the Architectural Digest Home Design Show and Brooklyn Made.

In the meantime, Kranyak will continue realizing his clients’ narratives—100 percent of his business comes from referrals. His approach to design is collaborative and he’s not intimidated by the fact that (thanks to things like HGTV and Instagram) clients are more informed these days. “I like the challenge of having to dig deeper,” he says. And often, digging deeper means sourcing pieces from Mecox—one of his top five go-to stores when he’s working on a project. Still, he’s not the kind of designer to go on an all-out shopping spree.

“A lot of times clients are so rushed to have a space filled and completed. Although it seems counterintuitive, I urge them not to. Space, just like in life, should be open. That feeling of being at

capacity can definitely thwart the ability to grow. Please, leave *some* space.”