

# PRIVATE AIR

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## LUXURY HOMES

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# A DIGITAL REVOLUTION'S CLASSICAL EVOLUTION:

*Inspired by High Tech, Josephine Homes Transforms Furnished Décor into a Fine Art*



Sitting in the Josephine Homes showroom surrounded by beautiful pieces of handcrafted classical furniture, the Company's Cofounder Natalie Shaheen seems as far removed from her former world of high tech executive offices as her Showroom's décor is from the mass market of typical home furnishings. Comfortably but primly dressed in a business suit and fine jewelry, Shaheen conveys the demur of a museum curator, fitting as the pieces she sells feel more suited to a classical art gallery than a furniture showroom.

Natalie has come a long way since her days as a high tech executive, when she worked as the Director of Marketing for

Oracle in early 2000's and founded her own Internet market research and consulting firm Netroscope in the late 90's. But the lessons Natalie learned from those days of coffee-fueled PowerPoints she carries with her into her new life. Instead of working with engineers and executives, today she collaborates with the finest Italian artists and craftsmen, as well as discerning clients that include high-tech executives. Yet the process, the journey and the destination remain the same- creating a customer-centric experience where individual taste is custom designed down to the last detail.

"Ultimately, what we are creating here is a user experience," Natalie reflected. "The tech world taught us the importance of tailoring

that user experience. From high tech, we learned the significance of customers' point of view and how to design everything from a customer centric vantage point."

Exploring the client's aesthetics begins with a simple conversation, held in the opulent Josephine Homes showroom in San Francisco's Design District, or in the comforts of the customer's own home. She discusses tastes, preferred colors and styles, and how to segue that all together into an integrated experience. Josephine Homes sells more than furniture, but an entire design experience that brings out the best in a home, one that appeals to the memories, dreams and the very aspirations of the homeowner.



“We blend every piece to create an integrated approach that harmonizes together in its own symphony,” Natalie related. “We are much more than a design house. Rather than our customers loving one particular piece, they enjoy how everything flows together as a whole. It conveys a very comfortable and enjoyable surrounding, a true expression of the client’s thoughts and emotions.”

Individual attention to detail is what transforms Josephine Homes’ décor from mere furniture into fine art. Rather than being throw away pieces, these are valuable, lasting heirlooms to be passed down generations. Everything is hand-carved, personally crafted and painted by master Italian artisans, emblazoned with

the Josephine Homes quality stamp to commemorate its authenticity. “Italians have a passion for quality that has been a tradition for generations,” Natalie explained. “Even our new contemporary line has a very detailed classical feel to its design that makes it a work of art.”

The pieces in Josephine Homes’ showroom are merely foundations for possibilities. Everything on display is available as shown, but more importantly, every piece is open to creative interpretation. An oil painting or carving can be personalized to include a client’s likeness, their child’s image hand painted onto an end table like a time portal to the Renaissance. Every piece is customized according to the client’s specific requirements.

And the artisans do not compromise on any critical detail in the interest of convenience. One particular desk to be refitted for a tall client, for example, required a complete design overhaul, as simply lengthening the legs would have given it a stilted look. Instead, every dimension of the desk was altered and customized for the client’s unique height so that its original aesthetics remained.

It is that drive for quality and precision that Natalie learned in the high tech world, a culture inspired by Steve Jobs and his attention to detail. In fact, that same passion for perfection is what drove Natalie from the world of high tech in the first place. She enjoyed the collaboration and had tremendous respect for the high tech company’s mission, but at the end of the day, something was still missing. She envisioned a grander dream to bring innovation into another business domain where her passion could be further realized. Essentially, Natalie aspired to integrate the philosophies she learned in high tech to the physical world of interior architecture.

And she was also frustrated with her own experience with the home décor market while decorating her California home in the early 2000s. Designers pushed their own ideas and styles they already had in stock rather than fit the Shaheens’ personal vision for their home. From her tech background where customer customization proved a key business model, Natalie realized she could leverage this experience from her own home décor to fill a key gap in the market. It was





at that moment she realized her opportunity as an entrepreneur and a business executive, molding both worlds together to create the perfect bond. Natalie discovered her true passion.

“We saw a need in the market because we knew the experience could be better,” she said. “We realized there is this class of artisans who are very true to their art but are being undersold. Their works need to be preserved, but too often get copied. They serve to the highest of their abilities and need to be rewarded for their talent and craftsmanship.”

She started Josephine Homes in 2002 to

satisfy the need for high-end customized décor that could also qualify as art. Progressively, the company forged connections with artists in Italy to create a symbiotic partnership where all could prosper, from the craftsman to the producer to the client. Natalie realized the importance of never prioritizing price primarily, that the art came -supreme, as beauty and quality were their own rewards. Indeed, the value is realized and enjoyed by the clients of Josephine Homes. It is a collaborative creation process Natalie had learned from the digital world, and it serves her well.

And she was sure to include the digital world into the operating model of Josephine

Homes. From the beginning, the company utilized digital pictures to model pieces when the rest of the industry was confined to printed catalogs. Josephine Homes utilizes 3D imaging and rendering to provide clients with a vision of what customized pieces will look like in their homes, digitally imposed in photos of rooms their customers plan to display them in. Designs and blueprints are shared through electronic communication between the clients and their artisans overseas so that everyone understands the vision for the completed setting or piece while the creation is still taking place.

Josephine Homes fills an important market segment that had long been forgotten where pristine quality and enduring value remain as hallmarks. Fundamentally, the quality, authenticity and style define Josephine Homes. “You cannot imitate taste, how everything endures together,” Natalie pointed out. “That is an art, and it is one that we excel at.”

That is evident in the fact that 90 percent of the company’s sales come from returning clients, including many well-known celebrities, as well as referrals. A customer decorates their home with a few pieces and then returns to bring more Josephine Homes into their haven. Once one foyer is decorated, they soon want a whole floor, their entire house designed and furnished by Josephine Homes.

“We all contribute our passion and talents to make our customers dreams come alive,” Natalie concluded. “That is ultimately the point. A beautiful home helps you appreciate the quality of life, makes you a better person by inspiring happiness. Essentially, home décor should be accessible art.”

A published poet since the age of 12 turned business executive turned entrepreneur, Natalie certainly thrives on transformation. Through one-on-one conversations with her clients as well as the insights and talent of her craftsmen and artisans, Natalie has personalized perfection, which her clientele appreciate in abodes that speak to their very dreams. Josephine Homes has proven a rewarding journey where quality and a refined taste of artistry reminiscent of the Renaissance has been revitalized for home design. ✈

*For more information or to schedule an appointment:*

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