



THE INNOVATORS

KBDN has named its sixth Innovators class, an annual selection of industry professionals recognized for their mentoring, education, design and the ability to lead the industry through challenging times.

STEADY VOICES THROUGH unsteady times are key to the continued health of any industry. When examining the Innovators chosen by *Kitchen & Bath Design News* for 2022, showcased on the following pages, the kitchen and bath industry shines with strength and leadership courtesy of those industry members who have risen to the top.

Unprecedented project numbers, spiking inflation and material costs, labor shortages and an uncertain economic future are all on the minds of designers, business owners and manufacturers. A changing marketplace means customers who spend hours surfing the internet for design ideas, employees who want to spend more time working at home, and showrooms that follow new safety protocols in keeping with post-pandemic needs. It's a lot – often overwhelming – to take in.

Leaders in the industry are stepping up, helping others navigate these challenges and more through seminars, mentoring programs, work in association chapters and educational initiatives. In addition, they continue to educate themselves about design trends, what customers want, and what's new and what's next. These top professionals continue to reach beyond the norms, breaking out of professional comfort zones to not only ponder how to best serve their businesses but the industry as a whole.

Kitchen & Bath Design News honors these industry leaders in its pages every year by naming The Innovators, a group of industry professionals who are setting the standard for excellence in the design industry. Nominated by their peers and then reviewed by the KBDN nominating committee, the 24 Innovators for 2022 are an extraordinary group of individuals committed to moving the kitchen and bath industry forward. On this and the next six pages, *Kitchen & Bath Design News* presents its sixth annual class of Innovators.

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Micqui McGowen

Texas Gulf Coast designer focuses on clients' personalities

High-end residential kitchen and bath design and project customization are Micqui McGowen's main focus. However, other projects

include design for executive kitchens in corporate offices and high-end multi-unit projects.

McGowen has been in the kitchen and bath industry for over 30 years and has recently taken over ownership of Houston-based Kitchen and Bath Concepts. She is a graduate of the University of Texas with a degree in Interior Design and is a Certified Master Kitchen and Bath Designer as well as CAPS Certified.

The designer has been published in *Houston House and Home* magazine, *Kitchen and Bath Business* magazine and *Woman's Day Kitchens and Baths*. She has received honorable mentions in multiple National Kitchen & Bath Association kitchen design competitions and served on a Sub-Zero Advisory Committee for new product design and development. She served as president of her local NKBA Texas Gulf Coast Chapter and was elected to NKBA's National Board of Directors in 2003. She also sits on the Advisory Board for the Interior Design Program at Houston Community College, which is an NKBA Affiliated School.

Kitchen and Bath Concepts' design portfolio spans design styles to include contemporary, transitional and traditional kitchens, bathrooms and adjacent spaces, featuring European and U.S. made products.



Jen Pinto

Designer's work garners national recognition

The satisfaction of transforming clients' lifestyles through design drives Jen Pinto, senior interior designer, Jackson Design and Remodeling (JDR) in San Diego. She leads and mentors the JDR design team of 15

people, guiding them to the highest levels of innovation and execution.

Pinto earned a Bachelor of Science in Interior Design from The Art Institute of California in San Diego, and a master's in Interior Architecture from UCLA. She is an Allied Member of the American Society of Interior Designers and an active member of the National Kitchen and Bath Association.

Her work has earned national recognition, multiple awards and features in both regional and national press. Pinto has been recognized by HGTV as a nominee in the Designer of the Year awards and in the Ultimate Outdoor awards. She won a National CotY award from National Association of Remodeling Industry for her modern farmhouse design. Other honors include the Chrysalis award, several CotY awards and a Master Design Award from *Qualified Remodeler*. Her designs have been featured nationally in *USA Today*, *Cottages & Bungalows*, *BHG French Style*, *Kitchen & Bath Business* and *Qualified Remodeler*. Regional press features include *California Homes*, *San Diego Magazine*, *Coastal Homes*, *San Diego Home/Garden Lifestyles*, *Modern Luxury* and the *San Diego Union Tribune*.



Lena McGuire

Designer surrounds herself with community of business-minded women

Designing professionally since 2009, Lena McGuire established Camillus, NY-based boutique design firm

Spóca Kitchen & Bath LLC in 2016. The understanding of how an effective remodeling project needs to function is key for McGuire; in fact, the name of her firm comes from the Irish word for spokes, as in bicycle spokes, as she views her firm's design method as a hub with radiant "spokes" that represent stages of the design process.

McGuire partners with her clients to solve existing problems and share ideas to breathe new life into old spaces, all with as little stress as possible. She guides projects from initial concept drawings through product selection to final installation.

As part of an effort to always be improving her business acumen, McGuire founded a solopreneur group of women who meet monthly to support one another through the exchange of knowledge and best practices. In addition, she attends seminars and other events in order to stay on the cutting edge of kitchen and bath design, as well as stay on top of the business of design.

McGuire is the Program Chair of her local NKBA chapter, Central New York, as well as a member of Home Builders and Remodelers of Central New York.



Ashlee Richardson

Young designer spearheads elite design projects

Ashlee Richardson, CID, chief design officer, Nar Design Group in Sacramento, CA, is an integral part of the design evolution and forward-

thinking projects produced by the firm since 2013. Colleagues note that Richardson is passionate about her projects in a way that tells the world she loves her career.

She attended California State University-Sacramento, where she studied interior design with an emphasis on interior architecture. Out of the gate from college, she participated in projects with technical challenges and moved into the luxury and ultra-luxury design space.

Richardson enjoys the hands-on experience of the complete design-build process. From the initial meeting to the final finished photograph, she loves creating spaces with thoughtful details specific to each individual client.

She leads a diverse team of designers at Nar Design Group through every project, many of which have been published or received awards. At the age of 30, her portfolio is considered exciting and robust, according to colleagues. In fact, in 2017, Richardson was tapped as one of the National Kitchen and Bath Association's "Thirty Under 30," joining the ranks of national design professionals who possess the passion and creativity to be the voice of the next generation of kitchen and bath experts.