

# OUT ON A LIMB

An interior designer takes a daring approach to transforming her clients' spaces.

By Mindy Pantiel

Interior designer Erin Iba once asked her clients to pay shipping from England on a room-size 18th-century bar for a kitchen in their New York home. When the couple questioned the move, Iba remained unfazed. "It's a work of art with a great sense of history, and you're going to love it," she said. And they did.

Iba, founder of Iba Design Associates ([ibadesignassociates.com](http://ibadesignassociates.com)), is known for pushing the envelope. She once hired the graffiti artist Flavor Paper to create a custom mural of Batman skiing for the family room of a Vail retreat. "It's a playful ode to where they live," she says. For another client, she enlarged a Slim Aarons photograph and turned it into a mural of the Playboy Club to fill a home-office wall. "When I try something edgy, it has to be something that works with that individual," says Iba, who honed her design chops working for Jamie Drake before moving to Denver to open her own office. "Not everyone wants Playboy bunnies on their wall."

What everyone does want and need, she asserts, is a designer who pays attention to more than just furnishings and paint colors, and instead focuses first on a home's architectural integrity. "It's easy to throw up wallpaper and paint, but what really has to be addressed is the bones," says Iba. "It's the difference between putting a Band-Aid on something versus going for longevity."

Accordingly, most projects begin with less-than-sexy tasks like addressing the acoustic issues in a Denver loft plagued by high ceilings and concrete floors. Once the practicalities are handled, she embraces the details, like color-matching built-ins to the green of an apple-flavor Jolly Rancher or designing a marble coffee table large enough to eat off and low enough to dance on. About her fearless approach, she says, "Rather than playing it safe, why not go for something you think will be great?"

**FEARLESS** Erin Iba, who studied interior design in Paris, brings an inventive and playful style to the table, helping clients reimagine their indoor spaces.

