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Designer Michael Payne

photo provided by Michael Payne

Designing for the Sexes in Frisco

By Wendy Crooks

HE STARTED OUT earning a degree in mathematics and physics and then spent 10 years in the computer industry in England. It wasn't until coming to America, for what was planned as only one year, that Michael Payne decided to "rethink his whole life." "America is the best place in the world to open people's minds," he said. "Shortly after coming here, I just knew I wanted to follow my heart which has always been in design."

He knew he wanted to be some sort of artist but he also knew he didn't want to starve to death pursuing his dream. After more soul searching he finally enrolled in an interior design program at UCLA. After graduating and gaining some design experience with a Los Angeles firm, he founded Michael Payne Designs in 1980. His company continues to offer design consultations to national and international clients. In 1998, the producers of HGTV came to Los Angeles with a basic idea for a show. They intended to have 13 episodes, 13 different couples and 13

different designers on a show called *Designing For The Sexes*. They invited Mr. Payne to be one of the 13 designers. "My episode went really well and the others weren't going so well, so they asked me to do them all," he remembered.

Now widely recognized for his hosting gig on HGTV's *Designing For The Sexes*, Mr. Payne comes into our own living rooms to give us a glimpse of his fabulous talents. And just as he is on television, he is a perfectly charming gentleman in person as well.

PAYNE DESIGNING FOR PAYNE

He is currently working on a project called, "The House of Payne" which will result in at least a book and a DVD. This enormous project is the undertaking of a major remodeling and addition that Mr. Payne is "up to his eyeballs" in with his own home in California. Of course a play on words, he has definitely realized that even someone who does what he does for a living will suffer at least a few painful

moments when remodeling. He is filming and documenting every moment of the project. "By the time it is complete," says Mr. Payne, "we will have enough footage to have a television series, a special, or whatever we want to do with it."

So what sort of design does this fabulous artist plan to use in his own newly renovated home? His 1926 Los Angeles home was the first house of its kind in that area. It is a Spanish-influenced home with beautiful arches and tiles. "I really feel that it would be inappropriate, because of the style of the house, to go very traditional or very contemporary." It makes you wonder if he designed his newest furniture line specifically for his own home. La Questa is the name of the new collection depicting a unique and exotic Spanish and Mediterranean design. Of course, he plans to use the beautiful line throughout his home. "I do have one room that I will probably use the Ascot line just to change things up a bit."

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Michael Payne is interesting both professionally and personally. His family life includes his wife Janice whom he's been with "forever" and his son, Justin. Justin graduated from Colgate University in New York and it is no coincidence that the last name of the graphic designer for the "Let's Ask Michael" book cover is 'Payne.' Justin Payne is responsible for the cover design. The book is a compilation of more than 3,500 questions that have been asked and Mr. Payne selected his top 100 most interesting and pertinent questions and answered them in detail.

With or without his "House of Payne" project, his home life is like a zoo or at least a trip to your local pet store for sure. He has iguanas, cats, tortoise and even a pet pig. Their pet pig is named Hampstead, which ties in the ham-like creature with one of their favorite cities in England.

His most challenging clients are those that are indecisive. It is just as important to know what you don't like as what you do like.

Michael loves traveling, skiing, running competitively, photography and gardening. He is a self-proclaimed health nut but not a purist. "I believe in everything in moderation," he added. Mr. Payne says that Janice shares many of his passions. While he can barely finish one race before he's thinking of the next, Janice is content just doing one race. While she enjoys gardening, Mr. Payne can spend endless hours in the garden either tending to the plants or photographing them. He believes that "gardening is the essence of life. The flowers, plants, bugs, nothing is more beautiful." Mr. Payne seems to enjoy life to the fullest. With each activity in his life, he seems to go to the furthest extreme.

Mr. Payne also admits to living his whole life being enormously trusting. "I don't think it is necessarily a bad thing, but I have been very trusting of people all my life. I have been burned a few times but I just don't want to live my life in caution." Between



From Michael Payne's Mayfair Collection

photo provided by Michael Payne

loving to take risks and trusting in others, he has admittedly taken on a few very challenging projects. He instantly recalled one of his former clients. The client said, "You're the sixth interior designer that I've hired to date." Mr. Payne recalled, "A normal person would have seen a red flag there and run in the other direction. I just saw an instant challenge." And trusting in his own instincts, he was happily that client's last interior designer.

Mr. Payne's most challenging clients overall are those that are indecisive. If you think you might be one of those challenging clients because you don't know what you like, Mr. Payne says, that's not necessarily true. "It is just as important to know what you don't like as opposed to what you do like. For example," he says, "If you are a person who doesn't like a lot of clutter, you probably like clean open areas which tells me a lot about what you might like with regard to design plans."

A VISIT TO FRISCO

Traveling to new and exciting places is one of Michael Payne's biggest passions. Coming in November, this delightful man will visit Frisco. The folks from Bella Cosa Home Furnishings are hosting a first class stay. When he flies in, he will be picked up, of course, in a Bentley. He

was ecstatic when he learned of this saying with his charming English accent, "This is wonderfully exciting! With regard to cars, I've always enjoyed the best of the best and a Bentley is the best. I am so looking forward to coming to Texas."

His hosts plan to take him to dinner at Jasper's in Plano where the restaurant staff will surely treat him well. He admitted he will even try the Blue Cheese Potato Chips because, after all, everything in moderation!

After an evening of Texas style fun, it will be down to business. Elaine Williamson, owner of Bella Cosa, will literally role out the red carpet for a fun and festive royal flair. On November 11th Mr. Payne will give two design seminars at Bella Cosa Home Furnishings in Frisco Square. The seminars are open to the public and welcome those with design questions. You will even be able to check out the new La Questa furniture line. Two lucky winners will be awarded a 30-minute consultation with Michael Payne to help spruce up their own homes.

The cost is free but space is limited so you must register at Bella Cosa for both the seminar and the chance to win the private consultation with Michael Payne.

Wendy Crooks is a freelance writer living in Plano.