

Square Feet Studio proud of its unique projects

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For the AJC

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Vivian Bencich is the co-owner of Square Feet Studio, the award-winning firm known for designing smart and stylish homes, businesses and some of Atlanta's top restaurants.

Background: Grew up in Winston Salem, North Carolina, and went to Vanderbilt University, where she was an art history and French major. In her senior year, she took a modern architecture class that she loved. She came to Georgia Tech for grad school in architecture.

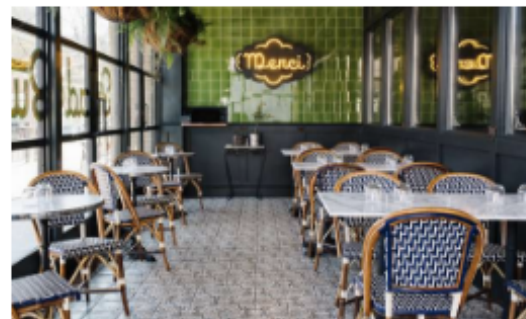
First design job: Worked as an intern at Nix Mann & Associates (now Perkins+Will), where she saw a well-run office with a great studio culture and client base. In 2001, she and her husband John started Square Feet Studio in Atlanta.

Where you have seen the firm's work:

A variety of unique projects in and around Atlanta, including projects (West Egg Café, Preserving Place, Room & Board and Sid Mashburn) within White Provision on the Westside; Karoo Optical Boutique; The Mercury; H&F Burger; Hop's Chicken at Ponce City Market; and Kimball House in Decatur.

Claim to fame: Received awards from the Atlanta Urban Design Commission; the Georgia chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA); the Georgia chapter of the International Interior Design Association (IIDA); and the Atlanta Decorative Arts Center (ADAC).

Design pet peeves: Designers pontificating too much about design.



The design for Bread & Butterfly, a new cafe in Inman Park, is by Bencich and company, and features a paneled main dining room and bar with casual seating that spills out onto a cozy porch and sidewalk. The firm designed the custom steel doors that fully open up the interior to the outdoor streetscape in this walkable part of town. Contributed by Andrew Thomas Lee.



Vivian Bencich co-owns Square Feet Studio with architect-husband, John Bencich. The couple and their design firm were recently named Southern Living magazine's "50 People Who Are Changing the South." Contributed by Andrew Thomas Lee

Current design obsessions: Materials with a history that just get better over time.

Biggest design mistake I've made: Not realizing that a side yard setback on a residential project was 15 feet per the county code instead of the 25 feet as listed in the neighborhood covenant. The county code is the one to follow. "It was a problem because we had designed an addition to the home that then required a variance since we didn't have that extra 10 feet like I'd thought. I was a young intern at a small office, and I will never forget it. "

... and mistakes homeowners make: Not being forthcoming with their designer about their budget from the beginning. It only prolongs the process.

Favorite:

- **Atlanta designs/buildings:** The Eastside BeltLine trail (her office is located next to the trail); the Trolley Barn in Inman Park. Also the MailChimp offices at Ponce City Market; the courtyard at Studioplex; and the Glenn Memorial sanctuary and little chapel by Philip Shutze on the Emory campus.

- **Atlanta-area shops/showrooms:** Bungalow Classic. Also Paul Plus, Schumacher, Janus et Cie and Ann Sacks showrooms at the ADAC.

- **Atlanta shops for unexpected finds:** Dixon Rye.

- **Blogs/Websites:** Bitter Southerner; Dezeen; Remodelista; and Southern Souffle.

- **Instagram:** nickolsenstyle; oldfourthward; heathceramics; and tinydoorsatl.

- **Magazines:** Cherry Bombe; Hospitality Design; World of Interiors; and Garden & Gun.

- **Movie/TV interiors:** Any Wes Anderson movie, especially "Moonrise Kingdom."

About Vivian

Her personal style: Eclectic, thoughtful, and a little slow moving when it comes to working on her own home.

Favorite pieces/spaces in her home: Her daughter's little clay sculptures that are displayed on a long shelf in the den. Also, the paisley Schumacher wallcovering on the ceiling of the dining room.

Can't stop buying: Art, books and wallpaper.

Recent projects: In Atlanta, a new Delta Sky 360 Lounge at the Woodruff Arts Center; Staplehouse restaurant on Edgewood Avenue; Bread & Butterfly café in Inman Park; and in Houston, State of Grace, Ford Fry's first restaurant outside of Atlanta.

What's new — or next: A series of projects at Pepper Place in downtown Birmingham as well as some larger hospitality and corporate projects in Atlanta. Plus, she and her husband just started designing a new ground-up home in Morningside that they are excited about too.

Find Vivian Bencich at:

- **Website:** www.squarefeetstudio.com

- **Instagram:** @squarefeetstudio

- **Twitter:** @sqftstudio

- **Room & Board**, 1170 Howell Mill Road, on June 7 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Bencich will be on a panel discussing "Restaurant Design and the Aesthetics of Interiors." The event is part of the upcoming MA! (Modern Atlanta) International Design Expo and MA Architecture Tours May 31-June 12 (MA-designishuman.com).