

*“The California Look”  
embodies everything that people  
love about Southern California.  
That relaxed, resort-feeling ...*

**S**urrounded by lush, dark-green tropical plants, a young boy strides down the blue-tiled steps of a small indoor pool. Floating in the shallow water, he watched through the glass panes as his family — his mom, dad, grandparents, brother, cousins and uncles — walked past him, along a little path and down the stairs to the beach.

“I remember the light was interesting, with an almost dreamy quality,” said Loren Kreiss, the fourth-generation of the Kreiss family furniture business, as he recalled one of his most vivid childhood memories. “This part of the beach was very secluded. Movie stars were our neighbors. There was the whole indoor-outdoor lifestyle going on.”

The magical place was Malibu Beach; the year around 1985. Kreiss was 4 years old. To this day, his childhood memories playing at his grandparent’s weekend retreat evoke the same sense of casual luxury that his family’s furniture collection continues to reflect in today’s market.

“It wasn’t overly opulent, but I remember the vibe,” Kreiss said. “It was glamorous but not stuffy. And I felt all that even as a young child.”



*The Kreiss Family in 1966:  
Norman, Eileen, Mike, Bob and Tom.*

# “The California Look”

HOW THE KREISS FAMILY CAPTURED THE  
QUINTESSENTIAL OUTDOOR LIFESTYLE.

BY JANINE ROBINSON





*Art, texture and scale all play an important role in establishing the Kreiss signature look.*

As Managing Director of the 75-year-old business, Kreiss says the custom furniture evolved over the years to define what is now known as their trademark “California Look,” an understated, yet elegant blend of natural materials, a soothing color palette and generous, over-sized pieces. Their upscale furniture, bedding, accessories and design services typically include warm, hand-carved woods, earth-inspired hues of stone and sand and organic patterns and textures.

Kreiss says the resort-style aesthetic of their furniture and design was a natural extension of the family growing up in Los Angeles’ most exclusive neighborhoods, travelling the world and vacationing

in some of the most exotic spots.

“It’s a certain shared experience growing up in L.A. We are around entertainment personalities, the indoor-outdoor lifestyle is huge, homes are large in scale. There’s a certain aesthetic you get from living here. Same with the travel. You stay in high-end hotels and you start to get a sense of what a home is like that doesn’t impose too much on the people staying there.”

“Our look is like that, in that it’s neutral, kind of like a hotel, and we add our accents in our accessories, pillows, pictures and art. The furniture is there to serve a purpose, not to be imposing. It’s just our general philosophy.”

Kreiss emphasized that although he is speaking on behalf of the company, the business is owned and run among his grandfather, Norman, his father, Mike, two uncles, Bob and Tom, and himself.

“There are a few things that define us,” said Kreiss. “One is ‘The Look,’ two is the family and three is our interior design. A huge part of our story is that we are now expanding and moving toward the future.”

The business was started in 1939 by Kreiss’ great-grandfather, Murray Kreiss, who left a successful silver company to begin importing mostly novelty items from Japan. When he died relatively young, his two sons, Norman and Howard, assumed his business and continued to

grow it. Tragically, Howard was killed in 1958 in a plane crash over Japan. Norman, however, was able to maintain the business and opened the company’s first showroom in West Hollywood in 1968.

During those early years, Norman and his wife, Eileen, travelled extensively, and they imported distinctive furnishings from Italy and Asia to outfit their own home. Inspired by the enthusiastic response to their design choices, the couple quickly expanded their import acquisitions to countries such as Spain, China and Thailand.



*From left: Norman, Murray and Howard*

“THERE ARE A FEW THINGS THAT DEFINE US. ONE IS ‘THE LOOK,’ TWO IS THE FAMILY AND THREE IS OUR INTERIOR DESIGN.”

– Loren Kreiss







*The neutral, soothing palette lets the outdoors come in and command a larger role.*

of the family’s vacation travels, including Palm Desert, Las Vegas, Laguna Niguel and La Jolla.

“That was our expansion strategy: We would open showrooms where we wanted to visit,” he said. “We are really more of a family that happens to be in the furniture business. We are not a furniture family. The furniture is more an extension of our lifestyle.”

Kreiss said one factor that helped launch the business was its early celebrity following.

“I think we were in the right part of town,” said Kreiss, explaining that his grandparents socialized in the same circles as the Reagans, the Sinatras and other high-profile residents. He said

that his grandmother, Eileen, was the most social of the family. “She brought the feminine touch to the company.”

It was during these years that Kreiss often visited his grandparents’ Malibu home and experienced their casual, yet luxurious lifestyle.

“That’s it, the walking down to the beach, swimming in an indoor pool, having the family all around,” he said. “It was comfortable and natural, and very stylish and glamorous at the same time. My grandmother had the housekeepers all wear uniforms. They always had a ‘Plato Bonito,’ a platter made out of radishes, celery and black olives.”



*Eileen with her grandson, Loren, in 1983*



*The Kreiss Family in 1974: Norman, Bob, Eileen, Tom and Mike*

“While they were collecting all these items, their friends would visit their home in Los Angeles and started asking where they found all their furnishings,” Kreiss said.

In the early ‘70s, the family decided to start making their own furniture, and initiated in-house manufacturing and upholstery operations to ensure the highest quality for its distinguished clientele. At this point, their designers began blending the casual comfort and relaxed accessibility with the natural materials and neutral color palette that introduced the “California Look.” The family opened the first of their 20 showrooms on Santa Monica Boulevard in West Hollywood.

After that point, Kreiss said the continued expansion of the business mainly followed the path







*A room should flow  
from one end to the next,  
indoors and out.*

In the '80s, Norman and Eileen's three sons, Mike, Bob and Tom, extended the original expansion by moving the company presence beyond design areas and into retail venues. Starting in the '90s, the company launched its own interior design section, and started designing entire mansions with their signature "California Look" for clients, such as Magic Johnson, Michael Strahan, Bruce Springsteen, Janet Jackson and Mohammad Ali.

Today, Kreiss says that despite the current recession, they have been able to continue expanding, opening new and better locations in Florida, Nevada, Colorado and Texas. Most recently,

they opened a showroom at Fashion Island® in Newport Beach and have four more showrooms scheduled to open in 2011, including locations in Silicon Valley and Naples, Florida.

Kreiss says he hopes to continue to keep the company current by capitalizing on social media networks and state-of-the-art technology. But one thing that will remain constant, he says, is the company's loyalty to "The California Look."

"We are sticking to the plan," he said.

*Kreiss has showrooms in 16 locations throughout the United States and Mexico, including one of their newest at Fashion Island in Newport Beach. 949.729.9194. 1.800.KREISS-1* 📍