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Left: Inhabit Design takes homes and businesses from mundane to magnificent. Partners Michelle DiMauro and Heather Soto photographed at Kevin Barry Fine Art Associates, a frequent stop when consulting on high-end projects. **Bottom left:** A bachelor pad design from Inhabit located on the top floor of the Park Avenue condos.

Design Queens

When it comes to interiors, the ladies of Inhabit Design know the value of risk management

BY KATE SILVER

+ PHOTOGRAPHY BY SABIN ORR

As Michelle DiMauro and Heather Soto see it, television doesn't just entertain the household. It changes it — in a good way. Thanks to shows like "Trading Spaces" and "Top Design," the owners of Inhabit Design are seeing their clients choose more color, embrace graphic wall coverings and, in general, approach design with a new open-mindedness.

"People are willing to take more risks," says DiMauro. And the more daring people get, the more they need the help of a designer.

DiMauro and Soto launched their business in November 2007 after meeting at another Las Vegas design firm. With the downturn of both the housing market and the economy, it was a risky time for a start-up. But since they began, their phones haven't stopped ringing.

It's easy to see why. With a contemporary aesthetic and a flair for style, the two can transform any room from mundane to marvelous. They've worked with clients in Chicago, Southern California, Oregon and Las Vegas, with projects ranging from home makeovers to commercial makeovers. One recent favorite was a design for a window-tinting shop.

"You don't usually think of a window-tinting shop as that exciting," says Soto. "But the owner wanted it to look like a very contemporary space. So we put in funky lighting and cool zebra wood veneers, modern furniture and high gloss walls. And he also wanted to use a lot of sustainable products." By the time they were done it looked unlike any window-tinting shop the duo had ever seen.

The projects just keep coming, and growing more diverse. Their day-to-day schedules consist of anything from complex luxury high-rise jobs to more simple tasks, like paint consultations.

Their business is bolstered by the unique nature of Las Vegas. From the city's transcendent drive for re-invention to its rapid growth, the opportunities are unending. For that, Soto and DiMauro are grateful.

"I don't know a lot of cities in the United States where we would have such varied work and a constant influx of people that need designers," says Soto. ▀

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