



MEET THE DESIGNER

Joe Passero

BORN INTO THE BUSINESS, KLAFFS EXECUTIVE KNOWS IT FROM THE GROUND UP



Founded almost 100 years ago in Norwalk, Klaffs built its reputation on selling building supplies and household fixtures. Third-generation executive Joe Passero worked his way up through the family business from stockroom to decorative plumbing specialist to kitchen and bathroom designer.

Crisp And Clean Minimal clutter and high gloss surfaces give this space (THIS IMAGE AND LEFT) a refreshing simplicity. Cabinets are from Klaffs Professional Series by Ovation Cabinetry. Glass pendants are from Arteriors' Laura Kirar Collection. Cooktop, wall oven and hood are Wolf; refrigerator is Sub-Zero. See Resources.

When did you start at Klaffs? From an early age, I knew I'd be part of the business. My elementary school was Marvin in East Norwalk, and after school, I would walk to work over the Washington Street Bridge. I'd help out with stock work, cleaning up—whatever job there was. I liked doing that more than homework. **What led you specialize in decorative plumbing?** I'd been warehousing and making deliveries. We'd closed our lumberyard and were moving into decorative. Everybody else in the family seemed to be in the lighting end of it, and there was nobody really handling the other areas. I was taking us out of screws, nuts, bolts, painting, paneling, molding, the kind of hardware store we were for many, many years. I ended up moving into kitchen and bath. I learned to do drafts for kitchens and designing bathrooms. Creating our decorative plumbing business is my greatest accomplishment. **You often work with**

designers and contractors. But what's it like working with individual customers? People come in with a picture from a magazine or the Internet. It's gorgeous, but they have a five-by-seven-foot space, and they want to make

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it look like 15 by 15. It's a challenge to give them the style, the color range, the type of products, and create a feeling of that picture. We try to put that dream together. **Do people tend to match the era of their house?** Even the most classic homes are doing contemporary kitchens and baths: They are a fashion statement even though they have an enduring lifespan. **Is the business driven by fashion?** We're really in

the home-fashion business—it's a very trendy business. Things go in and out of style, just like clothes and cars. If it weren't a fashion business, there would be no excitement in the industry. You need new looks and new things. I wish kitchens were like shoes, you could have 70 pairs of them in your closet. **What's trending?** Not necessarily ultra modern, but a more transitional look. The style is very tailored, clean lines, not quite as old fashioned as it was. We're streamlining cabinetry. Details on faucetry and hardware are simpler and cleaner. White, gray and taupe are very popular. In electricity, the trend is LED. Within five years, almost every light fixture will have some kind of LED component to it. **If you weren't doing this, what career would you have pursued?** I think I'd be an architect. I love architecture, buildings. I love drawing and creating. I play the drum a lot—but I'm not that good a drummer, I couldn't make a career of it. —Sharon King Hoge

KITCHEN: KIRT WASHINGTON; PASSERO; NEIL LANDING JR.