





Designing another person's home can be difficult. Getting to the point where you're good enough to be invited to do so is even tougher. You might start out painting glassware for the Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS (DIFFA) and then teach art to elementary school children. Traveling and living throughout Europe and the United States as a "military brat" and an adult wouldn't hurt, either. You could create some murals in between and settle down with an English husband/business partner. Then, if you have time, you could star on a hit HGTV reality show. At least that's how Jennifer Bertrand did it.

Owner of Bertrand Designs and contestant on this season's "Design Star" on HGTV (call-in voting to select the final winner begins on Sunday, July 27; as of press time, Bertrand was still in the running), Bertrand has worked with her husband on a variety of projects, including Mission Hills mansions and the Symphony Designers' Showhouse. And she has no problem bringing her Old World-meets-contemporary flair into the Kansas City homes and spaces she designs. "I try to give people the little black dress," Bertrand says.

To appease the little girl in her who finds inspiration in memories of grade-school field trips to Austrian castles along the Rhine River, Bertrand sneaks off to Round Trip Imports in DeSoto (see sidebar for more information). "[They] import stuff from Europe," she says. "It's a good little secret. They have pieces of furniture, lights from old palazzos, everything."

When her more contemporary side strikes, Bertrand, who frequents First Fridays in the Crossroads Arts District, shops Black Bamboo and High Cotton—two Crossroads furniture galleries she loves.

The rugs she selects for clients are carefully hand-delivered by Cindy Pratt-Stokes, owner of Princess Jasmine's Persian Rugs. "Cindy is good because she cares. She doesn't just sell you a rug; she wants it to be the *best* rug."

When it's time to really start cooking, Bertrand loves the variety and style offered at Portfolio Kitchen & Home, and she adorns her clients' bathrooms with Scandia Down towels.

Her work, which has ranged from cabinet restoration to the creation of hand-painted wall maps of Italy, is best defined by the interior of Salon Reaction (11520 W. 135th St., Overland Park), a nearly ceiling-to-floor signature of her love for abstraction and brilliance.

"I love color," Bertrand affirms. This is evident in the full-wall, geometric flower mural in the salon's waiting room, and it is reiterated in the vibrantly striped paint that spans the length of the space's walls, which are lined with gorgeous patina- and rust-oxidized abstract canvases painted by Bertrand herself. As diverse and unique as the rest of her work, her canvases, which Bertrand calls her "true calling," range from the abstract pieces in Salon Reaction to personalized triptychs done on commission.

Bertrand knows the stigma associated with living in a Midwestern city; she makes no apologies on "Design Star" and hopes her designs will put such misconceptions to rest. "You know what everyone thinks of the Midwest," she says. "They don't have a concept that's true to what it [really] is [like here]. [My job is] making honey oak finishes [look] French Provençal," Bertrand says of her Kansas City portfolio.

French Provençal that fits in a little black dress, that is. ■

## CELEBUTANTE JENNIFER BERTRAND: DESIGN STAR

STORY BY ANDREA NELSON

### TRADE SECRETS

#### FLORAL

Studio Dan Meiners  
1700 Wyandotte St.  
Kansas City, 816-842-7244

#### BATHROOM

Scandia Down  
501 Nichols Road  
Kansas City, 816-753-4144

#### RUGS

Princess Jasmine's Persian Rugs  
816-510-7734

#### ANTIQUE FURNITURE

Round Trip Imports  
33071 W. 83rd St.  
DeSoto, 913-583-1511

#### MODERN FURNITURE

Black Bamboo  
1815 Wyandotte St.  
Kansas City, 816-283-3000

#### High Cotton

114 Southwest Blvd.  
Kansas City, 816-421-3561

#### KITCHEN

Portfolio Kitchen & Home  
8027 State Line Road  
Kansas City, 816-363-5300



Local interior designer and HGTV "Design Star" contestant Jennifer Bertrand's signature style explodes off the walls of Overland Park's Salon Reaction (left). Bertrand photo by Mark Delong.



## KC'S TOP COMPANIES

A.L. Huber  
Acquity Group  
Asiatica  
B.B.'s Lawnside Bar-B-Q  
Barkley  
Bart's Electric  
Botwin  
Café Trio  
Children's Mercy Hospitals and Clinics  
Color Mark Printing  
DLR Group  
Eclectica Salon  
ER Marketing  
Harrah's Casino  
Henderson Engineers  
Highland Outdoor  
HMS Beagle  
J. Schmid & Associates Inc.  
Kiewit Power  
Lansing Trade Group  
Lockton Companies  
Magic Touch Cleaning  
Mail Print  
Muller & Co.  
Mutual Fund Store  
Nash Resources Group  
Perceptive Software  
Portfolio Kitchen & Home  
PowerOn  
RED  
Roger the Plumber  
Scott Rice Office Works  
Sole Patch Barbershop  
Sound Products  
SPIDERtel  
Standard Style  
Straub Construction  
Teva Neuroscience  
Time Warner Cable  
Two West  
University of Missouri-Kansas City  
Webster House Antiques

# CITY KC'S TOP 10 COMPANIES

STORY BY **ERYN SWANSON**  
PHOTOS BY **AUSTIN WALSH**

Kansas City's renaissance is a hot topic these days. From the revival of the urban core to our national ascendancy as a "city to watch," we're on the move. But Kansas City wouldn't be making such strides without the dedication and devotion of the myriad businesses, both small and large, that keep our economy going.

It isn't easy honing in on just a handful of companies that define this community. But that is exactly what *KC Magazine* and sister publication *KCB* decided to do. Once an internal committee narrowed down the submitted ballots to a list of Top Companies (at left), we put our external panel of five judges to work. We asked them to evaluate each organization based on their responses to detailed questionnaires that examined specific criteria: contribution to the KC lifestyle, innovation, growth, improvement through reinvention, employee relations, diversity, overcoming challenges, corporate culture, community stewardship and originality.

The result of their labors was the list of KC's Top 10 Companies—10 individual awards that speak to each finalist's greatest strengths. We'll reveal the overall winner, KC's Best Business, at our August 21 City's Best awards event ([kcmag.com/citybest](http://kcmag.com/citybest)). In the meantime, read on. You'll learn which illustrious companies made this year's top 10 and meet the people—the owners, the employees, the customers—who make them great.