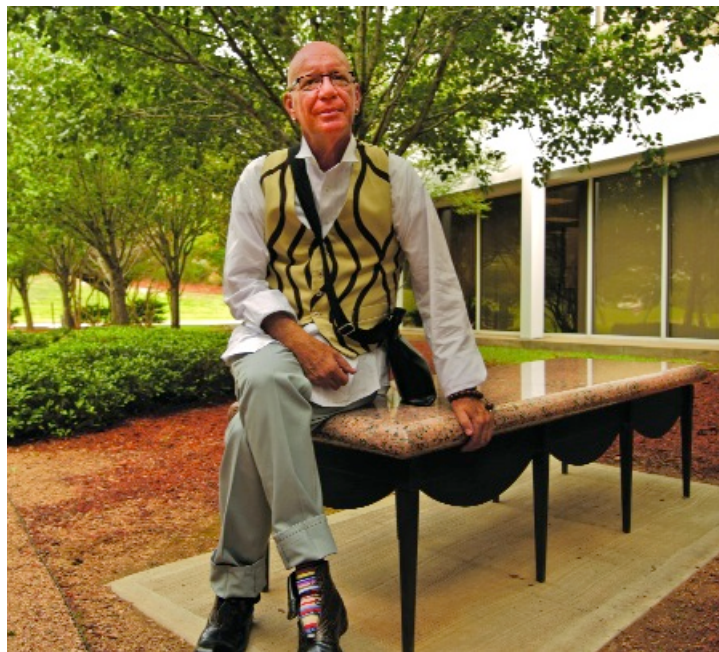


# KELLY GALE AMEN



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Kelly Gale Amen sitting on his triple bench topped with granite.

Interior Designer Kelly Gale Amen exudes a contagious “joie de vivre” that lives within him, surfaces in his humor and abounds in plenty with his original, creative and functional furniture designs. If you’ve lived in Houston without knowing this name, then you are in for a visual treat.

## Furniture Layers

An interview with KGA

### What or where was the starting point in designing furniture?

In 1990, I wanted to create the perfect bench -- one that would last forever. This was the triple bench with the stone top. Cast in bronze and layered with Texas fossil stone.

### In addition to interior design, was furniture designing something that always called to you?

The furniture was a natural extension. I once believed that home design would humor me forever. That being said, it has . . . but the additional creative energy derived from functional art furniture has opened up another layer of possibilities within my design offerings, as

well as client spaces.

### Tell me about some of your first pieces and how your line has evolved?

The first piece of KGA Functional Art was the triple bronze bench. The piece forges together its pieces using dovetail and dowel connects. Today, the collection is available in wood, resin, glass, stone and metals of choice.

### Tell me about your latest piece?

The latest is the settee. It has my signature square knee and tapered legs -- and the added ingredient of luxurious upholstery for comfort.

### Was there any past or present furniture designer who inspired you, or whom you admire?

I love the simplicity of Shaker furniture, as well as those pieces capturing both Greek and Egyptian influences. History is the test of time -- and it also inspires future possibilities.





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#### **What are our goals with furniture designing?**

Furniture -- clearer the craft and product --for me is a functional application of beauty. The less is more philosophy comes into play here.

#### **Do you name your pieces?**

No not really. I have used historical references to name some pillow creations however.

#### **What materials do you favor?**

Metal. My choice is bronze followed up with aluminum. These metals live well and long – and they can handle any abuse nature might wield.

#### **How hands-on are you?**

My involvement in the process begins with conception, which I then follow to culmination. I am there from the time it's sketched to the time it becomes a structural drawing. We also go through an approval and quality check period – before it advances to the final stage. I love being part of every needed facet. It's very satisfying and rewarding to say the least.

#### **Are some of your pieces on display at public places?**

The collection has grown and moved around. You can find pieces here in Houston at the Museum of Natural Science, the Looscan Library, McKee Street Park, the Lanier Building, Bush International Airport, the Jewish Community Center, NASA and more. Oklahoma shares in its state's art collection the 1898 Weatherford Bench, as does The American Embassy in Moscow, Lady Bird Johnson's Wildflower Center, the executive offices of Susan G. Komen for the Cure, the Ask Peace Foundation, the Zina Garrison





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Foundation and the Orel Foundation.

**Can anyone contact you about design?**

I welcome questions and all discussions related to creating a functional art piece. It is about embracing the idea that what some see as “ordinary” can become something more . . . something that is interesting, pleasing and quite personal.

**What country has inspired you the most and in what way?**

I love Kashmir, India. My travels there began in the early ‘70s, and I have just returned from this valley of beauty with more energy than ever.

## Getting Personal

**What can you not live without?**

White shirts. I have a collection of usable shirts that I wear on a daily basis. I also have a collection of beautiful dressy shirts – white and starched. And vests. I love vests.

**What is your personal style when it comes to furniture?**

Comfort and function. No more, no less.

**Where are you originally from?**

Born and raised in Western Oklahoma in the flat lands. There is nothing more beautiful than the skies seen in this part of the country.

**Where did you study?**

I have a BA from the University of Oklahoma.

**How long have you been in business, and where did you begin?**

My journey began in 1972 in Houston, at the design stall at Foley’s. Then I opened my own doors in 1974.

