

MODERN LUXURY

HOUSTON

WORLDS AWAY

Epic Journeys to Central America, Maldives and More!

RADICAL CHIC
LADY GAGA'S YOUNG
H-TOWN DESIGNER

WALK ACROSS TEXAS
A GALVESTON ARTIST STEPS UP

ACING IT!
KATE MARA SHOWS HER HAND
AFTER *HOUSE OF CARDS*

PLUS
THE CULT OF COLTIVARE
SEXY STAYCATION IDEAS
& ALL THE BEST BASHES!

[LOOK WHO'S TALKING]

"DREAM" GIRL

NEWLY MINTED REALITY TV STAR AND HOUSTON DESIGNER NINA MAGON IS READY FOR PRIME TIME.

By Evan Wetmore | Photography by Laurie Perez



MAGON'S HOTS

Fine-point pens,
green tea, morning
workouts, Marble Slab
4-inch heels

MAGON'S NOTS

Post-its, paper blinds,
papaya, flat shoes,
people who complain

Two years ago, raven-haired interior designer Nina Magon of Houston auditioned for HGTV's *Design Star*. She didn't make the cut, but she *did* make an impression. About six months later, a casting company asked her to audition for a new reality competition show on NBC called *American Dream Builders*, which Magon dubs a hybrid of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* and *The Apprentice*. The mom of two flew out to L.A. in August, tried out and made the show, and began filming a month later.

"It was like a boot camp for design," says Magon, 34, of her experience on the show, which premiered in late March and runs throughout this month. It features 12 industry experts—designers and builders—who each week are split into two teams and asked to completely redo two homes in a California neighborhood in a matter of days; a winning team is chosen by judges including Nate Berkus, and a contestant is eliminated. "Even though we were all established designers, it was interesting to be around who they consider to be the best of the best. It was great to pick their brains all day long."

The bubbly Magon, the only contestant from Texas, earned her spot on the show because of her self-proclaimed "glam-contemporary" aesthetic, as Houstonians have seen in her work via her Memorial-area Contour Interior Design firm, which she founded in 2007. She also designs furniture for clients—think low-slung, tufted sofas. And she just released an eponymous line of furniture and fabric last month. "My husband calls me a workaholic," says Magon, who's been married to hubby Karun for nine years. "But I have a very strong passion for what I do, and it doesn't feel like work!"

In her limited free time, Magon, a fitness buff, and Karun like to hunker down in their Memorial home and spend time with their two small kids. She's using the downtime after the show to catch her breath—but not for long. "I'd love to do a spinoff show," she says enthusiastically, "and educate people on interior design around the world. Maybe write my own book. I don't want this to be the end of my TV career."