



JUDY NIEDERMAIER (1939-2011)

Judy Niedermaier was the driving force behind NIEDERMAIER as a family, a company, and a vision for over four decades. Judy was born in Chicago and grew up on Lake Shore Drive. After earning degree in education from the University of Miami in 1961, she moved back to Chicago to teach elementary school and to start a family with her high school sweetheart, Dale Niedermaier.

Dale was working with the bohemian artist Milan Bulovich. Pop art silk screen prints such as those of Andy Warhol were the phenomenon of the art world at that time. Together, they pioneered the proliferation of these silk screen prints to department stores across the country.

In 1965, Dale and Judy started NIEDERMAIER, Inc. as a display company with a loan from Judy's family. Initially, Judy was doing the books, but her passion for design was insatiable. By 1970, she was in charge of the burgeoning operation, flying to New York and cities around the world designing windows for dozens of major players in the retail world, including Bloomingdales, Bergdorf-Goodman, and Saks.

Desiring to bring her passion for design into homes and offices, Judy founded the furniture division of NIEDERMAIER, Inc. in 1978, collaborating with several brilliant designers to create line after line of modern furniture that established the firm's vision. In the realm of interiors, her remarkable ability to combine elegance, comfort and luxury with the cutting-edge agelessness of modern design informs and defines NIEDERMAIER's mission to this day.

To pursue design she left her job as a schoolteacher, but teaching undeniably remained part of who she was. She was a mentor and role model to such designers as Vicente Wolf, Ed Schilling, and Nate Berkus, not to mention her son, her daughter, and her five grandchildren. She served on the Board of Governors of the School of the Art Institute, and taught there as a professor of advanced interior design. She established an award at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising in Los Angeles. Despite her success in the business world, she always cherished most the opportunity to mentor students and foster creativity.

A proud Chicagoan, Judy was a champion of her city. Like her friend, Mayor Richard Daley, she believed passionately in the ability of public art to bring beauty and design to her fellow citizens. She worked with the mayor to contribute to the 2000 campaign Cows on Parade and spearheaded the Suite Home Chicago campaign the following year. She worked with her friend, Chicago photographer Victor Skrebneski, to raise funds for the beautification of Water Tower Park on Michigan Ave. She was named Today's Chicago Woman's Woman of the Year in 2001, just one of many recognitions of her contribution to her city and the international design community. She was active in social circles and philanthropy throughout the city, taking up causes such as research for cancer and cerebral palsy.

She often cited her father, whose company manufactured uniforms for the army during World War II, and her grandfather, who was in the steel drum industry, also supplying the military during the war, as her inspiration in the business world. In the world of design, she most admired the legendary Andrée Putmann of France. Among her many favorite artists were Jean Cocteau and Pablo Picasso.

Judy passed away in January of 2011, after a year-long battle with lung cancer.

At NIEDERMAIER, Judy fostered a culture of creativity, collaboration and excellence that lives on among our craftsmen, salespeople and designers. Her wisdom, her unique and magnificent style, and her love for great design are immortalized in the company and in the impact she left on the design community. Nevertheless, she will be sorely missed and lovingly remembered.