

NEW YORK DESIGN CENTER

NEWS

Behind the Brand with Joyce Romanoff

In celebration of Women In Design, we were thrilled to sit down with Joyce Romanoff of 200 Lex's newest wallcoverings showroom, Maya Romanoff.

With a unique blend of aesthetic sophistication, technical expertise, and tireless energy, Joyce Romanoff has dedicated her career to making the “art of everyday” accessible on a global scale. Under her leadership, Maya Romanoff has grown significantly while remaining true to the founding vision of Maya Romanoff himself. Beyond expanding the company's global footprint and sales, Joyce has played a central role in the development of some of the brand's most groundbreaking collections, including Mother of Pearl, featuring hand-inlaid seashell tiles; Ajiro, made from ultra-thin paulownia wood veneer; and Beadazzled Flexible Glass Bead Wallcovering, a first-of-its-kind surfacing material, handcrafted in the company's Chicago studio.





Joyce began her journey with Maya Romanoff in 1988 as National Sales Director and rose to President in 2004. As both life and business partners, she and Maya built an iconic American company known for producing some of the world's most beautiful and imaginative surfacing materials. In 2012, the company was officially certified as a Women-Owned Business by the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC). Since Maya's passing in 2014, Joyce has served as CEO, leading the company alongside the second generation of the Romanoff family as they carry its legacy into the future.

Maya Romanoff is opening at the **New York Design Center** in April 2026 in **Suite 429!**

Tell us briefly about you and your job as it pertains to the design industry.

I've spent most of my professional life with Maya Romanoff, a company devoted to creating innovative, handcrafted wallcoverings and surfacing materials. I joined the business in 1988 as National Sales Director and eventually became President, and since Maya's passing in 2014, I've served as CEO. My role today is a combination of product development, brand stewardship, and relationship building. I love being involved in sourcing materials and helping our design team refine new ideas, while also speaking with designers and salespeople about how our products can be used in meaningful ways. As the face of the brand, I try to honor Maya's original vision while continuing to expand our reach and innovate in the world of surface design.

What made you fall in love with design?

My interest in design really began with craft. I took art classes in college and always loved the process of making—seeing the handwork in progress, learning the “recipes” behind materials, and watching something evolve through careful refinement. I’ve always been fascinated by how things are made. When I came to Maya Romanoff, I discovered another layer of design that truly captivated me: consistency. When I painted in high school, I could never reproduce something exactly the same way twice. At Maya Romanoff, consistency was the brand, and I realized how difficult—and beautiful—that discipline can be. It gave me a deep appreciation for the craftsmanship behind every piece we produce.

What’s the best piece of advice you have ever received?

The best advice actually came from my son, Michael, the current President of Maya Romanoff, when he was only eleven years old. In 1989, I had just started working with Maya and I was overwhelmed. I didn’t understand the wallcovering business and felt completely unprepared. I even wrote Maya a long letter explaining that I wasn’t equipped to do the job and left it on his desk. True to his nature, he never opened it—his desk was always full of papers. When I told Michael how discouraged I felt, he reminded me of advice I had once given him: never quit, try things, and don’t give up so easily. Hearing my own words reflected back to me was powerful. I stayed, and the rest is history.

What woman in the design industry (past or present) do you admire most and why?

I greatly admire Clodagh, the New York-based designer, who is also a dear friend of mine. Her sensibility and purity of design are extraordinary. She cares deeply about sustainability and natural materials, and her work always feels thoughtful and intentional. I’m particularly drawn to her sense of symmetry and balance, and I love the environments she creates—especially her spas and meditative spaces, which have a calming and restorative quality.

How do you define success for yourself now vs. when you first started?

When I first started, success was about digging in and getting the company organized. Much of my focus was operational—streamlining processes, improving systems, and helping build a strong company culture. I believed that if we could create that foundation, we would have a real opportunity for growth, and we did. Today, success feels different. It’s about pride—pride in the work we’ve done and pride in seeing the company thrive. I feel confident about the future, especially with the next generation of leadership guiding the company forward. The possibilities for Maya Romanoff are truly endless.

How have you seen the industry change for women over the years?

Over the years, I’ve seen a meaningful and inspiring shift in the design industry as more women step into leadership roles and build influential, women-owned businesses. When I first started, there were far fewer female founders and executives shaping the direction of the industry. Today, women are not only participating—they are driving innovation, setting creative standards, and redefining what leadership in design looks like.

At the same time, one thing that continues to distinguish certain companies is a commitment to quality and handcraft. While high-speed manufacturing is widely available today, there is still something incredibly powerful about the human touch.

At Maya Romanoff, that handcrafted aspect remains central to everything we do. It reflects a belief that design should carry the imprint of the people who create it, and that authenticity continues to resonate with designers around the world. As more women lead and influence the industry, I believe that appreciation for craft, creativity, and intentional design will only continue to grow.

Can you share a moment or project that made you feel particularly empowered as a woman in design?

One moment that stands out was in the mid-1990s when we were selected to create wallcoverings for hundreds of Victoria's Secret stores. It was our first truly massive specification—over 400 locations. At the time we were still a relatively small company, and the project required an incredible amount of coordination, craftsmanship, and determination from our team. It was hard work, but we accomplished it. Seeing our handmade materials installed across so many stores was deeply empowering and one of our biggest successes at the time. It proved that a small, passionate team dedicated to craft and innovation could achieve something truly extraordinary.

How do you stay inspired and push the boundaries of your own work?

For me, inspiration has always come from the people around me and the world beyond our studio walls.

At Maya Romanoff, the company my late husband, Maya Romanoff, built with such vision and artistry, the culture has always felt like family. Having my son, Michael Gutwaks, and my son-in-law, David Berkowitz, deeply involved in the business brings an incredible sense of continuity. Seeing the next generation bring their own ideas, energy, and perspective pushes all of us to keep evolving. It's not just about preserving a legacy—it's about building the next chapter together.

My grandchildren also play a big role in keeping me motivated. When you look at the world through their eyes, you're reminded that curiosity and creativity never have to stop. It encourages me to keep pushing boundaries and thinking about what we can create next.

Travel has always been another powerful source of inspiration. I love meeting our clients, designers, and suppliers around the world—experiencing different cultures, materials, and ways of living. Those moments spark ideas you simply can't get sitting at a desk.

And one of the greatest joys for me is walking into a hotel or a residence somewhere in the world and seeing our extraordinary surfacing materials installed. Whether it's a dramatic wallcovering in a lobby or a quiet moment of texture in someone's home, it's incredibly rewarding to see our work become part of beautiful spaces where people live, gather, and celebrate.

