

NOT JUST A **PRETTY SPACE**

By **Vivian McInerney**



DAVID PAPAIZIAN

Jennifer Leonard grew up in the design business and believes in being surrounded by those family things we love.

A beautifully decorated room gets attention, but our designers agree it must have the essential ingredient: you

Some spaces are meticulously designed; they have just the right furniture, the latest flooring and the best lighting. But after initially inspiring admiration, those visually flawless rooms can feel as soulless as window mannequins.

Successful residential design is so much more than just a pretty space. Professional interior designers can bring experience, training, and a fine-tuned sense of aesthetics to a job, but they often note their favorite projects include a surprising essential ingredient: You.

In this global market where similar, if not identical, home merchandise is available worldwide, individuality is a price-less commodity. “There is so much information out there, and people are so busy; when they go home, they want to see themselves,” says Angela Todd, principal behind **ANGELA TODD DESIGNS OF PORTLAND**. “Our job in the design community is to express them in visual form.”

For example, she has created a writer’s loft for an author and a den with subtle ship details to reflect the interests and collections of a former sailor. Other clients have included a couple who had European and Asian family treasures stored away or kept in separate rooms because they couldn’t envision how to relate the disparate collections. Todd found a way to incorporate the colors from a 1726 tapestry into newly upholstered pieces to tie everything together in a way that respected the antiques but felt as casual as the couple lived.

“Guests can walk through and figure out what the story of their life is,” says Todd.

People want to live in places that reflect who they are, agrees **ERIN DAVIS, OWNER OF MOSAIK DESIGN & REMODELING** in Portland. That makes us sound like a nation of narcissists, but Davis suggests that what we really want is to reflect deeper aspects of ourselves. That challenges designers to dig deep.

“Beyond ‘What color do you want? What theme?’ we have to ask, ‘What are the personal reasons you want this change? What do you want to feel in the room,’” she says.

It’s getting back in touch, Davis says, with why we live in spaces.

Davis had a client with a large, mostly unused daylight basement that needed design help. Talk of paint colors and furniture placement may be necessary steps in the process, but Davis felt she understood more clearly what her client wanted after asking one simple question: Why? Why did she want the basement refinished? The woman had two teenage children.

“She said she wanted to be the home the kids come to,” says Davis.

Davis created a space that teens would want to hang out in, one that also reflects the family’s love of travel by incorporating a world map to mark their shared adventures.

In Bend, where the lodge look dominates, **PATRICIA JULBER OF COMPLEMENTS HOME INTERIORS** finds “there’s a thirst” for something different. A recent job included a bedroom for a



ABOVE: Arlene Lord worked with a client to create a playhouse for grandkids that is sophisticated enough to serve as a guesthouse.

RIGHT: The playhouse includes an adult-size door and is a favorite spot for rainy-day reading.



STEVE EITINGE (2)

TOM BAKER (2)



ABOVE: Jonathan Hopp likes grouping small items for impact.

RIGHT: Sit in your favorite spot, says Hopp, and where your eye falls should hold something meaningful to you.



DESIGN ■ individuality

teen in a sleek modern style that almost looked back to the '70s for inspiration. Julber worked with furniture maker Dan Coker of Blue Pine Designs in Bend to create a one-of-a-kind black-lacquer platform bed with pewter nail heads, lights and matching dressers for “the fanciest room for a 15-year-old I’ve ever seen.”

“I call it frugal fatigue,” says Julber. “People are tired of holding onto their money. They really want to make sure that their family is comfortable and living well within their home.”

JENNIFER LEONARD OF NIFELLE DESIGN FINE INTERIORS IN PORTLAND had a young client in a new home who was starting from scratch. She could afford all-new everything but insisted on holding onto a couple of old chairs that had belonged to her deceased parents.

“Some of her relatives and friends thought, Oh, my god, you aren’t keeping those chairs!” Leonard recalls with a laugh.

The winged chair “was quite hideous when you first looked at it,” and certainly didn’t fit with the clean, classic, timeless design the client said she wanted. But Leonard understood its sentimental value because she too had items she intended to hold onto forever.

“I grew up underneath our dining room table,” she says. “I was an only child and would make tent forts under the table and play house with our Lab. It wasn’t a fancy-fancy table then, and it certainly isn’t 40 years later, but I love it and the memories that go with it.”

Knowing how the client felt about her chairs, Leonard had them rebuilt and reupholstered. The wingback was recovered in a chenille weave of turquoise, clay and mustard colors with a custom pillow. It sits in the master bedroom.

“It’s kind of her little haven,” says Leonard.



JON JENSEN

Erin Davis says getting in touch with why we live in spaces helps define design. She encourages clients to unpack beloved treasures and use them.

Sentiment comes in all shapes and sizes, and sometimes little things have big impact. **PORTLAND INTERIOR DESIGNER JONATHAN HOPP** grew up “the youngest of eight kids and poor” in Spokane. As a child, he often accompanied his mother to thrift shops in search of affordable treasures, and he still has a soft spot for vintage items. He picked up an inexpensive metal face-shaped chocolate mold at a flea market in Paris, a nut-shaped nutcracker, and a silver-toned prickly pear. None are particularly valuable, but grouped together on a small tray, they take on more importance and remind him of special times or travels.

“We’re all looking for the things that are meaningful,” he says. One of his clients had a collection of miniature teacups she loved. There’s a fine line between “stuff and tchotchkes” says Hopp, who “corralled the clutter” with shadow boxes. For



SIMONE PADDOCK

Patricia Julber says clients, including the teenage owner of this bedroom, have a good “vocabulary of design” and understand what a designer can and cannot do for them.

RIGHT: Every room tells a story, so the loft Angela Todd designed for a Portland writer naturally included plenty of bookshelves.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Taking note of a client's collection of antique portholes and watercolor paintings of ships, Todd pulled them together in a den that subtly hints at a captain's quarters.

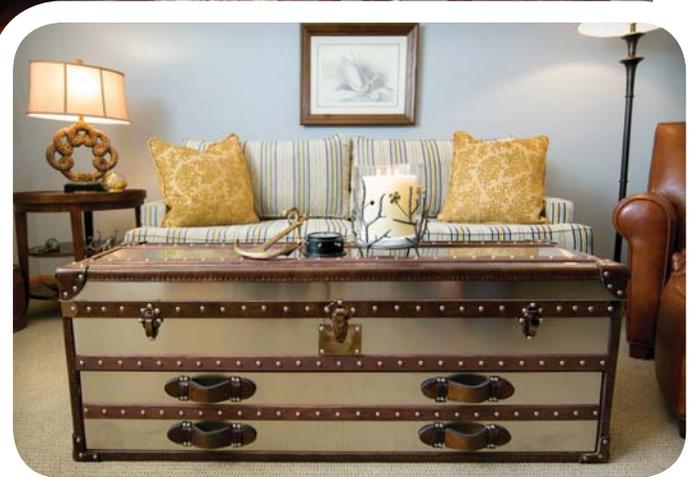


BURT KEPLINGER

another client married to an airline pilot, Hopp found an aluminum airplane that sits on a shelf, a visual memory of many years spent in the air.

"We have stuff in our lives that is meaning-filled for us that may not fit our dominant style," says **MICHELLE PELLITIER OF PELLITIER & PELLITIER LANDSCAPE AND INTERIOR DESIGN IN EUGENE**. "A good designer will be able to incorporate that respectfully."

One client had a vast collection of her mother's own artwork. The woman was prolific, producing scores of watercolors, oil paintings and etchings of everything from still life and land-



SUSAN BEIN

scape to portraits. Fortunately, she was also quite skillful. With framing and matting, Pellitier created groupings of related subjects and filled the walls.

Setting antique treasures beside contemporary pieces, flea market finds with valuable furnishings, turning so-so cast-offs into featured stars, contrary to looking like a big hot mess — appears a lot like real life, only more orderly and beautiful.

"We are OK with the eclectic thing that is our life," says **ARLENE LORD OF LORD DESIGN IN PORTLAND**. "We are a collection of our experiences, so having the things around us that reflect us, that we're comfortable with, to me, is a very luxurious feeling."

It's about creating a space that reflects the best of the way we live. It's the things that catch our eye now, the things that hold history for us, or the pieces we've picked up that remind us of happy times.

"We live in and are ourselves a collection of experiences," says Lord. "So having your home be a collection of experiences can be quite comforting and beautiful." 



DAVID PAPAZIAN

When clients feel at home in her designs, Jennifer Leonard says, "It just melts me. Sometimes you think 'it is just stuff,' but it's not. It really makes a difference in people's lives."