

# THE METROPOLITAN BUILDER

## INSIDE STORY



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Listening Leads to  
Missy Stewart Design's Success

Houston, Texas



# Listening Leads to Missy Stewart Design's Success

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

Missy Stewart of Missy Stewart Design puts her clients' needs first.

Recognizing that each client has his/her own personality, Missy said it's very important that each home reflects that client's style. To ensure that their homes fit their personalities, she meets with clients in their homes for a consultation as the first step of the design process so she can learn about them, including their interests and how they use their homes, both indoors and outdoors.

"I listen carefully to my clients. I 'read' them and do what works best for them."

Recognizing that not all people make decisions as easily

as others, Stewart said she tries to go through the process of design at the clients' pace and not at her own. Also recognizing that not everyone is able to imagine the ideas she is presenting to them, she provides renderings of her designs to her clients if they can't envision elements, such as furniture placement.

These renderings have been a game changer, she noted. They are so lifelike that her clients cannot tell they are not a photograph. "While I can literally see things in my head, I knew I needed to bridge that gap. A picture is worth a thousand words, after all."

Stewart said her clients lean toward contemporary design,



wanting more minimalism. “Steve Jobs did us all a favor [with the sleek, functional design of Apple products]. He educated America on minimalism.”

But it can be hard for people to downsize their stuff, she noted. “It is a process for clients to let go of their things.” She finds most of her clients have kept items – whether furniture or artwork or knickknacks – because of the memories they hold. Missy helps clients by reminding them that they will always have the memories associated with those items, even if they no longer can touch the specific item.

Missy Stewart got a chance to implement her lifelong

passion for design by making the selections during the 25 years she co-owned a construction company that built and sold speculative homes in the Reno/Lake Tahoe area of Nevada.

But with a downturn in that area’s economy meant “there was not a lot of design going on,” prompting her to move to Houston in 2012 and to start Missy Stewart Design, using ads on Angie’s List to gain clients.

“I never really dreamt that you could start a design business in a new town where you don’t know anyone. The timing was good. Design was all over the internet. My first Houston client was my brother. I used his house to add a



Houston project to my portfolio.”

Primarily using advertising on the internet and social media (with 5-Star Reviews on Google), Stewart has built her business to employ a staff that includes an office manager/procurement manager and two other designers. They are currently working on six larger projects of three or more rooms but have an additional eight smaller projects on their work board.

Missy noted that her knowledge of construction is one thing that sets her apart from other designers. “I love job sites. I am very comfortable walking around them. I can

walk in on the rough framing of a house and see where everything’s stubbed out. That’s the best time to catch mistakes, such as a misplaced electrical outlet or even a window.”

Despite her background in construction, she said she doesn’t want to manage a construction project. “I encourage clients to hire a contractor. I like designing!

Although she plans to stay in the Houston market, she admitted that she’d like to design more homes around the country because she loves to travel. She said she’s designed several homes in Las Vegas recently and one in Atlanta, but she’s hoping to break into the Aspen, Colo., market because she loves that area.

“You always have to be ready to change,” she stated. “As Will Rogers said, ‘Even if you’re on the right track, if you just sit there, you’ll get run over.’”

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