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Greater Houston Edition

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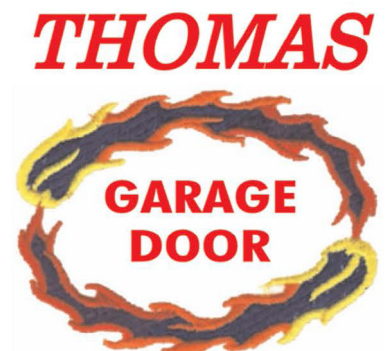
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SUNBELT BUILDERS SHOW™

July 14 – 17, 2020

Conference: 14 – 17 | Trade Show: 15 – 16

Sunbelt Builders Show™ – Bring Us Back Together!

The Sunbelt Builders Show™ prides itself on severing a large amount of people on a personal level.

The Show is designed to help builders, remodelers and associated suppliers get to know each other and grow their businesses – one by one. We all do business with people we know. And though the Show is the largest in Texas and draws in homebuilding professionals from around the United States, Canada and Mexico, the attendees feel like it was created for their individual needs.

The Show floor will sport more than 200 of the top manufacturers and suppliers showcasing the best new products and technologies in the homebuilding industry to thousands of the nation's elite residential construction industry experts.

Every year, we look forward to bringing the community together to create meaningful customer experiences and relationships. Meeting like-minded people inspires us, gets our creative juices flowing and gives us the opportunity to build partnerships. Being among our peers energizes us and gives us a forum in which to be or find industry mentors. We discover new ideas to make our companies stronger and find solutions to our everyday challenges. At Sunbelt, you can reconnect with old friends and make new ones.

In addition to the dynamic trade show floor, Sunbelt offers informative education and demo sessions on the Show floor. After hours, you will have the opportunity to engage in lively social events that will expand your personal and professional network. Throughout the week, members of the Texas Association of Builders (TAB) will be participating in their summer committee and Board of Directors meetings.

Make plans now to spend July 14-17, 2020 with the



residential construction community. The Show will be held at one of the top destination resorts in Texas, the Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center in Grapevine. The Gaylord Texan sits on the shores of Lake Grapevine with 4.5 acres of indoor gardens, 10 restaurants, a seasonal water park and two pools.

Online Sunbelt registration and hotel reservation is available at SunbeltBuildersShow.com. Sunbelt registration is FREE to builders, remodelers and developers for a limited time, so register soon, and a hotel room is available for Sunbelt attendees, exhibitors and TAB members. You may also call the Gaylord Texan Reservation Line at (817) 778-1000 and mention the room block for the Texas Association of Builders and Sunbelt Builders Show™ to secure your room.

This year's Show offers you the opportunity to come and connect with industry professionals on a personal level. We look forward to providing you, your family and your team an exceptional experience in July!

Continued on page 16

The management staff is moving forward with preparations for the 20th Sunbelt Builders Show™ and the Texas Association of Builders summer meetings on July 14 – 17 at the Gaylord Texan in Grapevine, Texas. Since mid-March, we have been monitoring the coronavirus pandemic and have been working diligently with the Gaylord Texan Resort and Convention Center, our registration company and show decorator to make accommodations for a safe and quality work environment for our attendees and exhibitors. We stand ready to deliver the level of service and experience you expect as soon as you walk through the doors. To see a complete list of our efforts visit <https://www.sunbeltbuildersshow.com/why-attend>.



Envision Design/Build's Success Depends on Collaboration

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

Jack Knowlton's experience as an architectural designer and builder combined with Garrett Shaw's training in construction management enhances the Envision Design/Build firm. Both men agreed, "We're very much a team. We work well together."

The company offers design and construction of new custom homes and remodeling in addition to construction management. It's been operating since 1998, although Knowlton has been creating custom architectural designs since 1981.

"What I think one of my strong suits as a designer is to be able to go with a homeowner and show them what their home will look like. Garrett comes in behind me and lets us know if the architectural vision is feasible," Knowlton stated. "However, we're able to value-engineer projects to a client's budget."

"Jack's industry knowledge and my aspiration for the project's success are a good fit," Shaw concurred. "It's your

knowledge, too, Garrett," Knowlton interjected. "You have become as important as I am to Envision Design/Build."

A graduate of the University of Houston's construction management program, Shaw does the estimating and scheduling for the six or more projects underway at any given time. He coordinates the subcontractors, tradesmen and laborers in conjunction with the company's field superintendent. "We have, over the years, acquired phenomenally talented tradesmen," Knowlton added.

"Garrett is personally committed to each project, ensuring the building process proceeds smoothly through efficient planning and scheduling," Knowlton stated. "He's earned himself a partner position at the firm."

"A big part of my job is to take care of clients. Jack always told me, if he doesn't hear from clients, I'm meeting client expectations," Shaw admitted.

Shaw joined Envision in 2014. "Garrett's the best employee I've ever had. He's a very smart young man. He started as



an intern, and I've been able to mentor him and teach him how I want a home to be built," Knowlton said.

"My objective is to stay heavily involved with the projects as Garrett increasingly takes on more responsibility in the day-to-day roles of the building business. He's on the upswing of his life. I've been doing this for over 40 years. I don't plan to ever retire, but I'd like to fuse my schedule to design work and site visits. I can design from my vacation home in Galveston," Knowlton admitted.

"I love Galveston's architecture. But I also love Memorial. I grew up in this area, went to Memorial High. We try and stay in the Memorial area. Those homes have so much potential to refresh and add footage while keeping the neighborhood's integrity," Knowlton continued.

Although he had 12 years of experience as an architectural designer, the first house Knowlton built was his own, also in the Memorial area, 29 years ago. During that experience of creating his own home, many people asked for his help with architectural design. He subsequently contracted with

several other homeowners to build them their dream homes and founded Envision Design/Build.

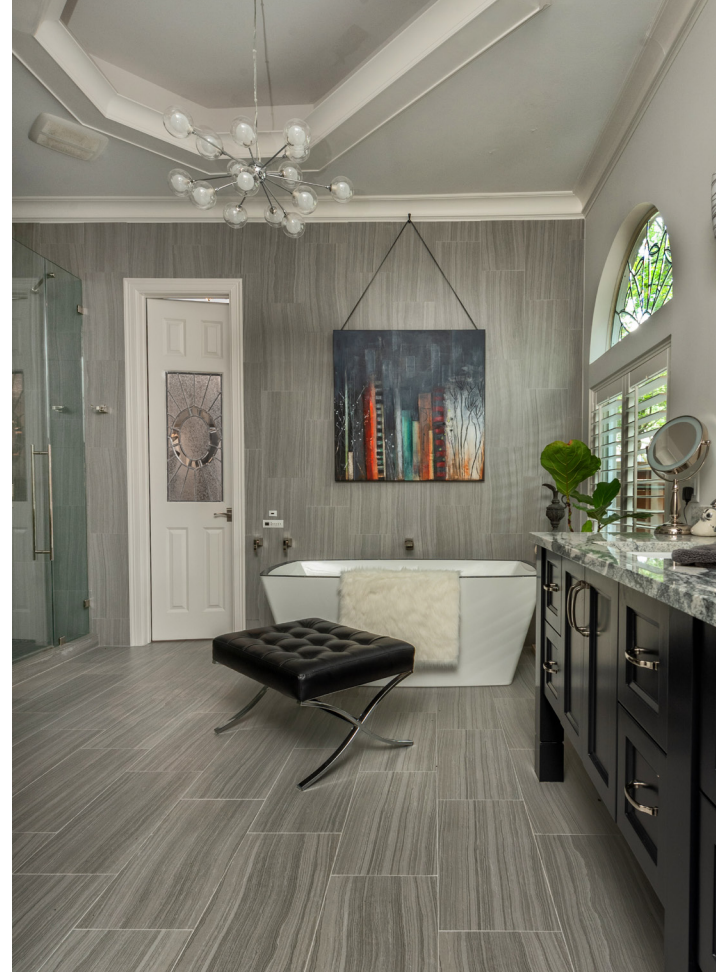
About 60 percent of Envision's work is remodeling, while 40 percent is new construction, including custom homes, garage lofts, vacation homes, town homes and teardowns. Most of the company's remodeling projects are in the 3,000-4,000 sq. ft. range starting at about \$250,000. Typical remodeling projects include outdoor kitchens/living spaces, full home remodels and aging-in-place modifications. Its new construction projects are 3,500 sq. ft. or larger and in the \$1 million or more range.

"There's nothing that's the same in all of our projects over the years. Everything we do is different and very custom," Knowlton offered.

While Envision has always built homes under contract, the team began its first speculative home in November 2019 and expects to finish it soon. "The buyers will be getting a

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chance to buy a very nice, custom home of the same quality as our contract homes,” Shaw stated.

Working with clients is one of the most appealing aspects of being a designer/builder to Knowlton. “Meeting with clients, dealing with clients, I love that. I am a very good problem solver. I look at problems as opportunities. Although it’s sometimes a challenge working in one of the most difficult industries in which to achieve high satisfaction, our clients become friends by the end of our projects.”

Those high levels of satisfaction are essential to Envision, which depends on word-of-mouth referrals for its business. “When we have a referral from the [prospective client’s] friend, we are confident Envision will be building their project.

“We’re known to be honest, trustworthy and up-front with our clients. If we can get in the door to talk to clients, we usually get the job,” Knowlton stated. “Building is all about trust. We’re very transparent.”

“We try to be as open with clients as possible,” Shaw added.

Several clients have contracted with Envision to do multiple projects. “One of the best feelings is when a

previous client calls later down the road and wants to take on another project. We call that Phase Two.”

Knowlton is proud of his certifications from the National Association of Home Builders, which include Graduate Master Builder and Certified Aging in Place Specialist. “I hope these designations show our prospective clients I care enough to learn more about the business I’m in.”

He also is a Certified Professional Building Designer and a Certified Green Professional. He has served as a committee member of the Remodelers Council of the Greater Houston Builders Association. He is a member of the Texas Association of Builders, National Association of Home Builders and American Institute of Building Design.

Additionally, Garrett was awarded a Certified Graduate Remodeler designation in 2017.

***For more information, contact
Envision Design/Builder
by phone at 713-789-8262 or
visit their website at www.envisiondesignbuild.com.***

***The office is located at
800 Wilcrest, Suite 120, Houston, TX 77042.***



International Flooring Expands Product Choices

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

“The most expensive floor is the wrong floor,” according to Richard Arnold, co-owner of International Flooring.

“Flooring is an expensive purchase. It’s not like buying a pair of shoes. When a builder comes to me, I ask a lot of questions. Will you glue it? Nail it? Staple it? What kind of pad? Moisture barrier? I apply my knowledge of construction as a former builder. I educate my customers a little so they will walk out happy.”

Because of changes in the flooring industry, International Flooring (IF) is changing too after 17 years in business. “We are becoming more of a product distributor instead of an installer.”

He continued, “We’re ‘way beyond wood flooring now. We’re putting a very strong effort into a diverse inventory. We now have about 500 different products in our showroom. We offer carpet, luxury vinyl tile (LVT), large-format tile, moisture shields and slab preparation” in addition to reclaimed antique beams, solid wood, engineered wood and laminate flooring.

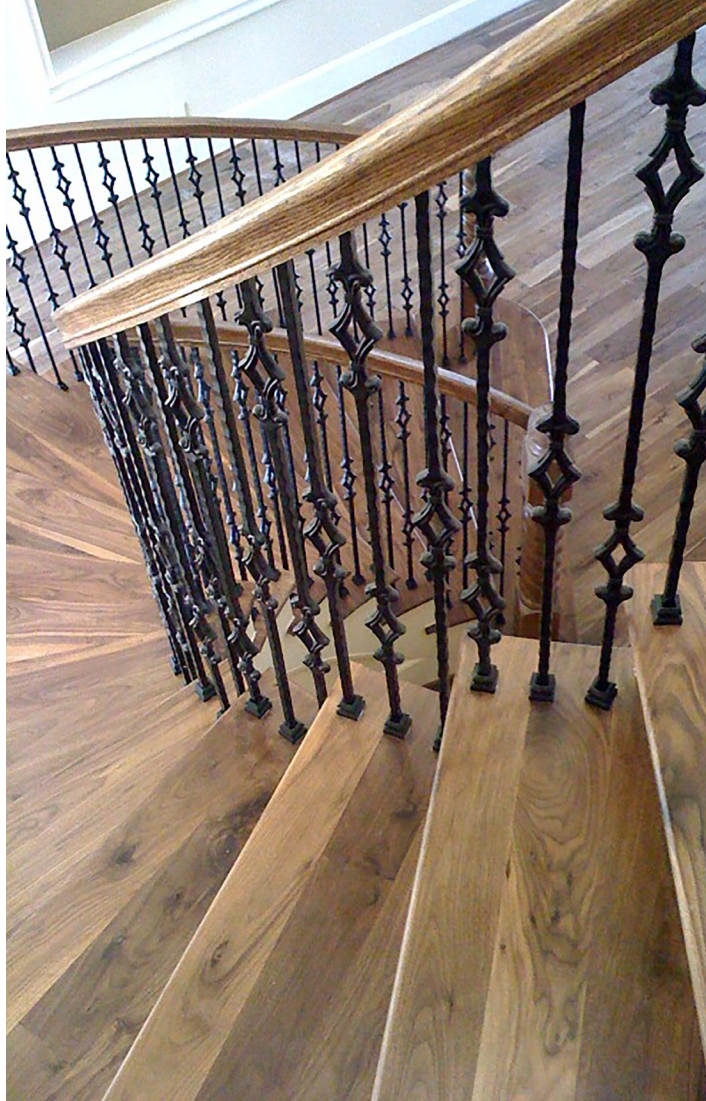
Richard said he attends trade shows and talks with

manufacturing representatives to find products that fit the Houston market for style, humidity and installation. “My focus is to fulfill the needs of my customers. I know what they want in looks, colors and price.” He said the most challenging customers are high-end designers who have been to Europe!

“We are focused on product knowledge. Every product I have, I understand it. I trust it. There are so many misconceptions about products from people reading on the internet. I can explain and put everything in context,” he noted.

While there are four basic options in flooring (wood, tile, carpet and laminate), many choices exist within each option. When builders or designers find a product they like the look of, Richard will explain how the product will perform.

“There are a lot of products out there. There’s a lot of crossover. Now there’s tile that looks like wood. There’re wood floors that have a vinyl core. There’s wood that has a vinyl top. There’s tile that is a PCP product; it’s waterproof



and doesn't use grout.

"LVTs are the fastest growing product. It was ugly when it came out five or six years ago. It was very utilitarian. Now it's very good looking. It's hard to tell that it's vinyl. Even I have to bend down to touch it to know the difference.

Other trends Arnold is noting: "We're seeing a lot of large format tile. And we're going back to natural, light colors in wood, getting away from the gray. Wire-brushed wood finishes are reappearing instead of hand-scraped."

"With so many choices, people are unsure. People assume the vinyl will be cheapest, but not anymore. Wood may be cheaper," Arnold stated.

"Flooring is actually highly technical." He will happily discuss synthetic vs. wool vs. natural sea grass soft floor coverings (carpet), or solid vs. engineered, or multi-layer vs. hard core, or real wood vs. laminate flooring. He can also provide expert information on how certain products may impact those with allergies.

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He said International Flooring is very competitive. “We have selection, variety, great prices. We can do multi-unit pricing. I can go to manufacturers for pricing also because manufacturers will not sell directly to builders.”

IF has a 3,500-sq.-ft. showroom as part of its office and warehouse facility. The company is about expand its showroom area by another 800 sq. ft. to allow it to display 300-400 more products. “We don’t need a mega showroom. Everything is selected by me. I pick everything I want. There’s a lot of junk out there. In big, big retail stores, you see a lot of duplicates. In my showroom you won’t see duplication.”

Arnold claims that “warranty” is a “fake word” in the flooring industry. He said he has never seen a manufacturer’s warranty honored in the 15 years he’s been in the business because it’s so hard to prove what constitutes reasonable wear and tear. However, the “best warranty builders have is me.”

Builders look for vendors who can support their products, he added. “Builders want a new product to fit in their system or to save money. The builder needs to feel comfortable the product will perform. I help the builder keep looking forward. The majority of my clients have been with me for seven to 12 years.”

One reason for those clients’ loyalty is the expert installation that International Flooring provides. “I’m focused on the right application and right installation for Houston. The humidity in Houston makes installation a challenge. We have 85 percent of moisture in our warehouse, but air conditioning dries out houses and

shrinks floors, creating major gaping. Raised houses are an additional issue. We encourage builders to let the wood flooring adjust to the lower 42 percent moisture in a house before installing floors. Builders do appreciate our knowledge, and that’s why we keep them as clients.”

However, many builders and homeowners will turn to a less expensive installer “until it costs them big bucks. Then they come to us to solve their problems.”

All of the sales staff and installers at International Flooring get on-going training in new flooring products and follow the National Wood Flooring Association (NWFA) standards, Arnold said. They also get training from the Greater Houston Builders Association and from manufacturers. International Flooring installation professionals adhere to the company’s protocols and training as well as the NWFA guidelines.

Richard’s role with the company is sales and marketing, and his partner Luis Hernandez’s role is finance and sales. The company also employs an accounting clerk, an office project assistant, a field manager and two back-shop workers in addition to the installer.

*You may contact
International Hardwood Flooring, LLC, at
713-895-7562 or at www.ifhouston.com
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*The company is located at
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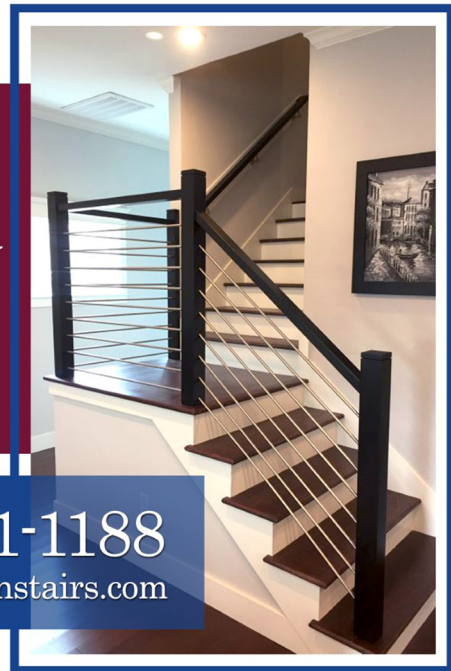


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Gregg Optekamp: An Artist Connected to the Cosmo

By Mary Lynn Mabray, ASID

On any given day, you can find Gregg Optekamp in his studio, painting on glass with a combination of mixed media, such as acrylics and oils, various chemicals and crystals that will result in a three-dimensional view of the space-time continuum that only Gregg sees in his mind. He then brings his vision to life on a piece of transparent glass. It's an ever-fluid view of time.

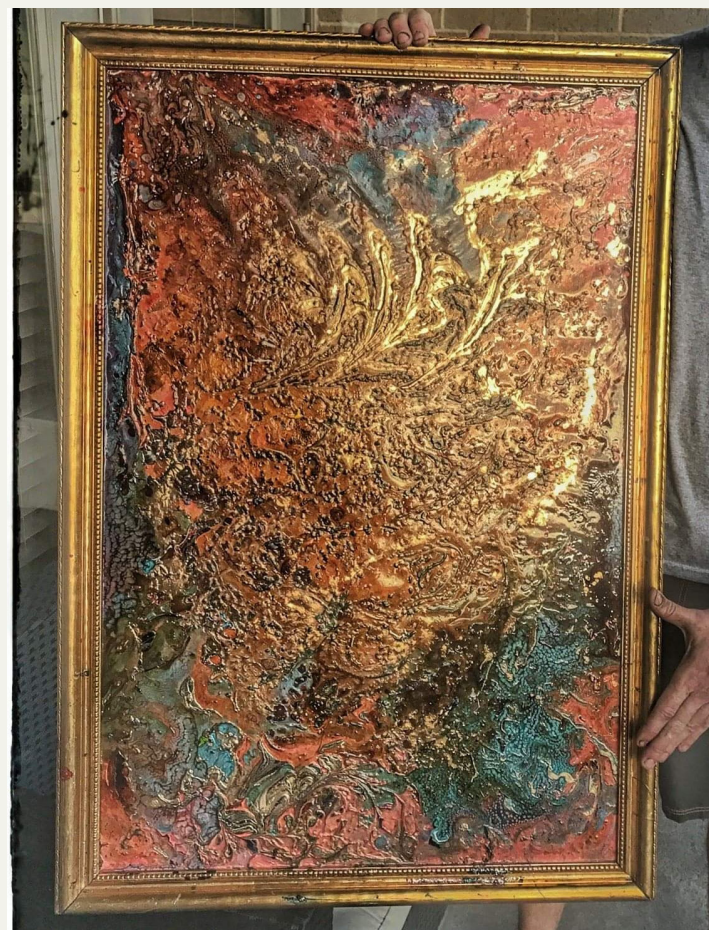
It's also an experiment with chemistry to manipulate each medium into layers on the glass to a translucent depth, a constant balance of chemical reactions that loosens, thickens and then hardens the chemicals to allow the glass to breathe. Optekamp manipulates the process with palette knives and natural brush strokes into a thing of beauty.

Looking at one of Gregg's paintings is like viewing the universe through the lens of the Hubble telescope. Gregg is a deep thinker, a man on a mission to show patrons – and there are many – what could possibly exist beyond the tiny view of space that we earthlings see each night as the stars put on a light show in the heavens.

“Believe, Let Go and Create” is Gregg's mantra. His paintings are vibrant and always uplifting. It's clear that Gregg channels something from “the divine,” the seen and unseen. With each work, he seeks to elevate himself and the mood of the viewers in the process. He is always striving for excellence and achieves it with each work of art.

Gregg has been painting since 2016, which is a relativity short time in the life of most artists. But the time and education Gregg spent living and studying all over the world before he began painting has brought him to this moment in time and as well as to this particular technique which creates visual magic.

It's been said that the hallmark of any great artist is the ability to unknowingly create faces, objects, mini-worlds that are only seen when the viewer studies the piece. There's a veritable group of beings and objects embedded in Gregg's work that are fun to find and then appreciate. Monet, Caravaggio, Van Gogh, Di Vinci and even Michelangelo possessed this talent. Gregg is in the company of the masters, and his work doesn't disappoint. His art is timeless

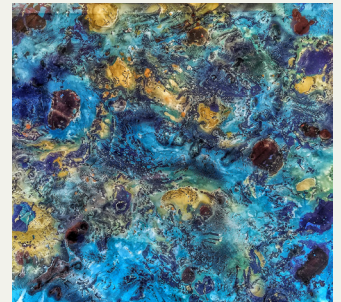


and always fresh. It's art that is rarely seen any more.

Gregg grew up in Europe with European parents who managed large international hotels all over the world. His artistic influences are steeped in the traditions of many diverse cultures.

Many of his pieces reflect his time in Asia; however, Gregg has taken those life experiences and built upon them to reflect his view of the universe beyond this world. That's a talent few artists have the ability to spontaneously create. But, Gregg Optekamp, is a "horse of a different color" – an artist who firmly grasps and understands his importance as a transitional, contemporary artist as well as his ability to capture the unseen.

Gregg Optekamp's extraordinary work can be seen and purchased at Meek Studio Gallery, 1901 Spring Street, Houston, Texas. Gregg is represented by Valerie Meek who may be reached at MeekStudio@gmail.com. Showings and appointments can be easily scheduled by calling 713-259-9226.



About the Author

Mary Lynn Mabray, ASID, is an interior designer with 25 years of expertise. She may be contacted at 713-203-4047 or at www.MaryLynnInteriorDesign.com.



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BOLD & BEAUTIFUL BLACK

by Linda Jennings

The use of black as a key accent in the bath is trending in new home design and tops the list for renovations. A matte noir faucet, black vanity, or black on white tub injects flair to an otherwise mundane space creating a sophisticated yet bold look. Ideal for all bath design styles from modern to art deco and all themes in between. Create these eye-popping looks and enjoy a space that's elevated to first class.

FREE-FLOWING DRAMA

The Serie 260 collection from the Isenberg Design Lab, offers an intriguing blend of structure and ease. The base of the faucet is softly curved with graceful lines inspired by gently flowing water, while the straight spout is elegant in its geometric simplicity. The overall effect is remarkable, perfectly pairing organic shapes with a contemporary sophistication that makes it a true standout. Serie 260 is available in single-hole or wide-spread designs with sleek handles that add visual interest and echo the minimalist vibe of the spout. The Serie 260 is a smart choice for creating a coordinated look in the bath with floor mount, wall mount and deck mount variations offered in chrome and brushed or polished nickel as well as matte black.

BROOKLYN-INSPIRED

The Blake tub from MTI Baths was born from a creative partnership with renowned NYC design firm Studio DB as part of an upscale Brooklyn condominium project. The result was so successful that The Blake launched as part of their exclusive Boutique Collection available to designers and builders alike as a luxurious soaker or air bath. This sleek tub is notable for its distinctive lip that accentuates its elegant silhouette and contrasting exterior matte black color. Available in material colors of white or biscuit, in either matte or hand-finished deep high-gloss, with eight optional exterior colors - a great choice for those who want to add colorful contrast to an all-white bathroom. The Blake is crafted from MTI's proprietary SculptureStone, a 70% mostly organic mixture of natural minerals mixed with high-performance resins to create a molded stone appearance that is solid, non-porous and resistant to stains, mold and mildew.

MODERN METAL

The Zoe from The Furniture Guild is a beautiful Mid-Century Modern vanity that offers stunning metal accents and clever storage solutions in a dramatic onyx finish! It features distinctive metal trim that surrounds the single

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2020 SUNBELT BUILDERS SHOW SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

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TUESDAY, JULY 14

- 8 – 9:30 a.m. TAB: Texas Housing Hall of Honor Board of Governors Meeting
 9 – 10:30 a.m. TAB: Developers Council Meeting
 1 – 3 p.m. TAB: Government Relations Committee Meeting
 3:15 – 4:45 p.m. HOMEPAC Trustees Meeting
 6:30 p.m. – 10 p.m. FUNdango & Washers Tournaments \$

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

- 8 – 9 a.m. TAB: Membership Committee Meeting
 8 – 9 a.m. TAB: Local Presidents Meeting
 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. EDU: *Managing Customer Expectations*. Presented by Stephen Kasper, John Todd, Michael Turner
 11:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. DEMO: *Writing Better Plumbing Specifications*. Presented by FlowGuard Gold® Plumbing Systems
 12:45 – 1:45 p.m. EDU: *Stop Promising and Start Delivering: 10 Simple Strategies to Close the Gap*. Presented by Beverly Koehn
 1:30 – 2 p.m. DEMO: *The Top Construction Defects of 2019 and How to Avoid Them*. Presented by Burgess Construction Consultants, Inc.
 2 – 3 p.m. EDU: *Best Practices In Construction*. Presented by Spencer Padgett
 2:30 – 3 p.m. DEMO: *Flashing & Air Sealing Techniques for Exterior Doors*. Presented by DuPont
 3:15 – 4:15 p.m. EDU: *2020 Economic and Real Estate Outlook*. Presented by TBD
 8 – 11 p.m. YP's Builders' Bash concert featuring Stoney LaRue with special guest Heather Linn & the Deacons \$

THURSDAY, JULY 16

- 7:45 – 9:15 a.m. TAB: Texas Executive Officers Council
 7:45 – 9:15 a.m. TAB: Codes & Standards Committee
 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. EDU: *Restoring Pride in the Trades: A Case Study on Creating a High School Tiny House Program*. Presented by Todd Eidson & Richard Laughlin
 11:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. DEMO: *Installing a Gas Fire Feature*. Presented by Warming Trends®
 12:15 – 1:15 p.m. EDU: *Crisis Communication via Social Media*. Presented by Phil Crone
 1:30 – 2:30 p.m. EDU: *Design Trends & What Buyers Want*. Presented by Jenifer Wiley
 1:30 – 2 p.m. DEMO: *Smart Living with Solar plus Storage*. Presented by Longhorn Solar with Adapt Energy
 3 – 5:30 p.m. TAB: Texas Builders Foundation Meeting
 3:30 – 4:15 p.m. DEMO: *Zoning Comfort Solutions*. Presented by ZoneFirst
 6 – 8:30 p.m. Star Awards & Excellence under 45 Reception & Awards Presentation \$

FRIDAY, JULY 17

- 7:30 – 9:30 a.m. TAB: Executive Committee Meeting
 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. TAB: Board of Directors Meeting

KEY:

EDU – Education Sessions

DEMO – Demonstration Sessions

TAB – Texas Association of Builders Conference Meetings

\$ – Ticketed Events

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drawer face, a metal finger pull, and handcrafted metal feet. Zoe provides ample storage for bathroom necessities with a clever drawer-in-drawer storage system featuring a full-height drawer face that conceals a split interior with a deep bottom drawer and a shorter version

above. Zoe's interior can be upgraded to a handsome walnut finish with interior lights, glass dividers and inserts, and a hairdryer holder. Each Zoe vanity is custom made to order by skilled craftsmen with no assembly line production.

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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

← **BOBBY BONES, "Fail Until You Don't"**
Radio & TV Personality, Author, Comedian, Musician



← **ALAN GRAHAM, "Community Can"**
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