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Dialogue with a Designer
Jennifer Kizsee

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Giselle Bernard
Publisher/Owner



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Bella Torre Homes Responds to Homeowners' New Needs

By **Kathy Bowen Stolz**

Home has never been more important to Houstonians dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic than during this past year.

As those homes became the families' offices, school rooms and gyms in addition to eating and sleeping places, many homeowners are focused on making their homes a more desirable place to live and work as they spend most of their time at home.

Mike Taubin, owner of Bella Torre Homes, is happy to take on the challenge of helping Houstonians create their dream home, whether it's with new construction, renovations or expanded version of their current homes.

And he is winning PRISM awards from the Greater Houston Builder Association along the way for his designs and craftsmanship in both new construction and remodeling. In fact, he said he tries to execute every project on a high-enough level to enter it into a competition.

Although Bella Torre (which means "beautiful tower" in Italian) will build anything the homebuyer desires, the company's purpose is to translate the homeowner's dream into something tangible that will be timeless, according to Taubin. Most of its homes, which are in the million-dollar plus range in the desirable Inner Loop neighborhoods, feature open and airy living areas, ideal for a homebuyer who loves to entertain.



Also front and center is the company’s focus on honesty, integrity, quality and accountability from top to bottom within its organization. “We put extra attention on detail and take great pride in not having to return to our homes for warranty work. Consequently, we receive great referrals from our clients!” Taubin exclaimed.

This year he’s really excited about his speculative homes’ projects, which incorporate the latest, most innovative technology, such as enhanced sound systems and programmable light switches, into the integrated electronics systems. “All of the electronics can communicate with the rest of the house -- the equivalent of a fully loaded luxury car but for your home,” he said.

He’s also incorporating health and well-being into the homes’ designs. Homebuyers, who have spent more time than ever in their homes during the past year, want saunas, steam rooms, dedicated work-out spaces, high-quality air systems and whole-house water filtration systems, Mike said.

They also want larger pantries -- pantries large enough to hold a second refrigerator and the myriad of appliances that clutter most kitchen counters -- allowing the kitchen to seem clean to drop-in visitors. He’s also adding in-suite bathrooms to home offices to accommodate those many, many people now working from home.

For the last few years Taubin has expanded its portfolio beyond new construction to include remodeling projects

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throughout Houston. Recently it expanded again to include kitchen and bathroom renovations. Approaching 10 years as a business, Bella Torre Homes now generates about 40 percent of its business from remodeling projects. “Remodeling can be very rewarding. It’s very gratifying to give clients their vision,” he noted.

“With every project I think about what features I would want to come home to. I am constantly looking at the newest projects in other cities, taking inspiration from the best of the best but making them my own. I am known for my creative use of space, using every inch [of space] available. I can take an ordinary space and make it something really special.”

Some of those projects add square footage while others update living areas to include the amenities of new homes, including indoor-to-outdoor spaces, without moving perimeter walls. Some of those clients had just moved into their homes while others lived in their homes for 10 years and don’t want to uproot their families to move into a bigger, better home.

“A lot of clients are trying to figure out how to make a second office at home. They’re starting to inquire about ADUs [accessory dwelling units], which are stand-alone rooms in the backyard so a homeowner can work from



home without the family interruptions. They're not as expensive as you'd think, especially when compared to renting office space. Think of them as the new 'she shed or man cave,'" he added.

Taubin advises, "Most people should plan to spruce up their homes every 10-12 years to keep them current and to fully enjoy their home. People should plan and prepare for their renovations, setting aside funds so they will have the money to allocate to update their homes."

He continued, "Remodeling demands extra steps [compared to new construction]. You make assumptions and plans based on the age of the home, but you need to be ready when you open the space and discover the structure was built using older standards. Contractors need to be transparent and have good lines of communication with their clients during the remodeling process."

He especially prides himself on his lighting design, "layering light" by using multiple different light sources on dimmers to provide the cozy yet luxuriant feel of a five-star hotel lobby. "Layering light is not expensive, but it takes experience to execute it correctly," Mike said.

Another feature many homeowners seek in their new

or renovated homes is enhanced outdoor living spaces, which allows them to blend the outdoors with the indoors and expand their entertaining space. Taubin prefers to oversee the entire process, whether it's landscaping or pool construction, because he said those projects are typically extensions of interior remodeling, and he understands the clients' vision. His oversight guarantees cohesiveness and quality.

He is excited to offer automated pergolas. These louvered roofs, which are watertight and easy to clean, can be operated remotely. He noted that they are 30 percent stronger than the closest competitor, strong enough, in fact, for someone to walk on the louvers without falling through. Bella Torre Homes is the only authorized dealer in the Houston area.

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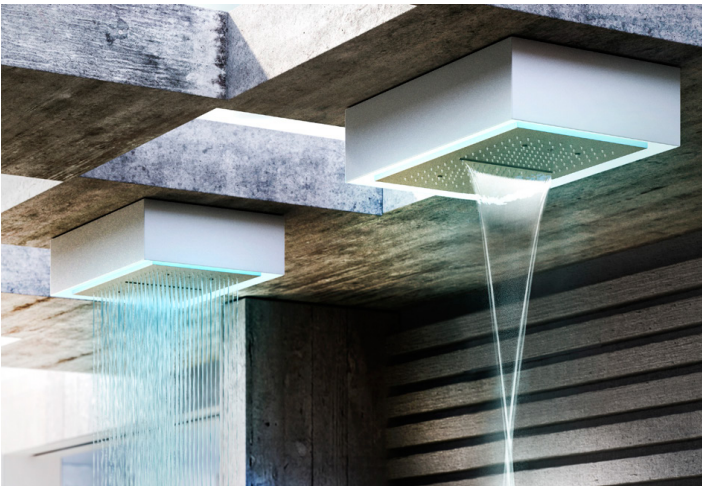
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Crushing On These New Home Products

By Linda Jennings

Leading manufacturers have upped the design game with product innovations for the bath and beyond that deliver five star luxury builder updates! Invest in products

that make a statement and create luxurious amenities transforming dream homes into reality.



Afilo Shower Collection from Gessi

SHOWERED BY LIGHT

The Afilo multi-function system brings beautiful visuals and the essence and renewal to the shower experience. As part of Gessi's Private Wellness® Program, Afilo pairs the power of light and water to create a sensory oasis designed to refresh and restore body, mind and spirit. Chromotherapy lights shine through and merge with the falling water in a mesmerizing effect that is soothing yet invigorating. The rainfall/waterfall collection includes fixtures in square, round and rectangular shapes that may be installed recessed into the ceiling or exposed in a boxed design. Users may customize their lighting color choices, including shades of gold, blue, green and purple. Available in an array of beautiful finishes the Afilo is an elegant and refined addition to the bathroom.

AMERICAN-MADE AFFORDABLE VANITIES

Lenova now offers a new line of bathroom vanities that are made in the Hillside, Illinois and capture the best of American innovation and old-fashioned craftsmanship at a surprisingly affordable price. Lenova combines hardwoods with furniture grade plywood to make a thicker case guaranteed to stand up to the toughest bathroom environment without warping or splitting and all the stained and painted surfaces have a catalyzed baked finish. Blum



Manhattan vanity in Blue Danube from Lenova

hinges and drawer slides offer soft close action and years of trouble free use. The company offers vast and ever-growing selection of design, finish and stone top options. Shown here is the Manhattan vanity in Blue Danube.

STYLISHLY SMALL

Ideal for smaller spaces, this petite freestanding Lydia bath features an integral pedestal and integrated slotted overflow.



Lydia tub in Plum from MTI Baths

It is created from MTI Baths' signature SculptureStone, a proprietary material that is 70% organic natural stone combined with high-performance resins. You can actually feel the difference with this molded stone that is solid throughout with high insulating properties to keep bath water warm longer for extended soaks. SculptureStone tubs are non-porous and resistant to stain, mold and mildew, with a glossy finish that is simple to clean and maintain. It is available as a soaker or an air bath and shown in custom color Plum. All MTI tubs are handcrafted in the USA to the highest standards of quality and customer specifications.

THE FEEL OF LUXURY

Discover the delights of tactile textures with the pairing of the Quadrato Linen Rosette with the Circolo Crystal Knob from Viaggio Hardware. Textured finishes bring visual warmth and interest to this extraordinary door hardware



Quadrato Linen Rosette with the Circolo Crystal Knob from Viaggio Hardware

line. The Linen Rosette has a subtle and sophisticated surface. Like finely woven cloth, the embossed finish is truly elegant. It has a distinctive look that is classy and refined. When paired with the Circolo Crystal knob, bold geometry and modern design come full circle. The crystal is made from lead-free crystal, which has remarkable clarity and shine. Each rosette is equipped with the company's Concealed Screw Mechanism (CSM) for a seamless look without exposed screws. Every piece is precision polished and coated with a protective lacquer for lasting good looks.

A TWIST ON TRADITIONAL

BainUltra's new BeOne delivers a lavish massage in a singular circular tub. Built especially for one, its compact design requires little floor space, yet its deep bathing well with built-in seat allows a single bather to rest comfortably upright for a supremely satisfying soak. The BeOne tub is offered as a soaker or with the brand's signature



BainUltra's new BeOne Tub

Thermomasseur technology with up to 40 air jets and Geysair hot air system for the ultimate hydro-thermo massage. The tub is crafted of 100% pure acrylic for impressive durability and a long-lasting beauty that is easy to clean and maintain. Measuring 46" x 39" x 30", the tub is available in a glossy white, with options for a dramatic black and white finish or the brand's Ultravelour matte finish.



Lily Wall-hung Toilet from ICERA

HUNG UP STYLE

Toilets on the wall are a BIG trend right now, and ICERA gives us lots to love with a new collection of four wall-hung designs, each with its own look but all sharing the brand's trademark plumbing technology and outstanding performance. Wall-hung toilets are increasingly popular

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Room & Board Makes a Splash in Bath at KBIS Virtual 2021

Room & Board, the modern home furnishings company synonymous with American craftsmanship and sustainability, will be making its first-ever debut at this year's virtual KBIS, showcasing an extensive line of modern bath vanities, accessories, and decor. The 2021 Bath Collection will bring together the best of contemporary design with a seamless business service model adapted from the brand's commercial arm, Room & Board Business Interiors .

"We are excited to mark our entrance into the bath segment with the industry's premier show," explains President and COO Bruce Champeau . "For over 40 years, we have been committed to perfecting products and services for an unparalleled customer experience . Our bath collection

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is a reflection of that devotion, combining those trusted elements of our brand that our customers have always valued with Room & Board's trademark timeless, modern aesthetic."

Fusing the brand's signature style, sustainable practices, and artisan roots with Room & Board Business Interiors'

tailored services, the Bath Collection caters to architects and designers with a plethora of original vanities with multiple finishes, sizes, eco-friendly quartz tops, and sink options. Complemented by coordinating hardware, mirrors, lighting, rugs, storage, and decor, the full collection brings together artful function and subtle beauty for a luxurious and cohesive bathroom oasis.

Room & Board's 2021 Bath Collection - Vanities



Copenhagen Vanity Collection



BerkleyVanity

Instilling a Business Interiors' level of service, specifiers and designers will receive plentiful advantages, including: complimentary space planning and furniture specification services, transparent pricing, high-volume discounts, free warehousing, full-service white glove delivery for a flat rate of \$79 anywhere in the United States and 5-and-10-year product warranties.

Holding true to company ethos, the Bath Collection keeps sustainability at the forefront. Using sustainably sourced American woods and modern steel, more than 90% of products are made in the US by trusted craftspeople to provide the utmost combination of quality and price - and the fastest delivery - with the least amount of environmental impact. As a founding member of the Sustainable Furnishings Council (SFC) and one of Fast Company's Most Innovative Companies , the brand has received accolades for its commitment to upholding conservation values, proper forest management, and responsible wood sourcing.

The anchor of the bath collection, Room & Board's vanities are inspired by classic design styles of the past, including arts & crafts, Japanese and modern minimal design, and finished with sustainable, eco-friendly quartz tops. Using responsibly harvested American maple, cherry, walnut, and ash, and corrosion-resistant steel, US artisans make each bathroom vanity to the same exacting standard as all of the brand's storage collections, with special construction details like dovetail joinery and hand-applied stains.



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Dialogue with a Designer

Jennifer Kizzee

Baths of America opened its doors in January 2005 when brothers Ali and Zeeshan Sultanali decided to start selling plumbing and tiles to the Houston market. Baths of America focuses on customer service and partners only with brands offering quality products and customer service. In addition to plumbing, Baths of America now offers door and cabinet hardware, major appliances, cabinetry, and countertops. It has turned into a one-stop shop for designers, builders, and architects, offering the latest designs and trends in the market.

This month BATHS OF AMERICA speaks with Jennifer Kizzee, owner of Jennifer Kizzee Design, a full-service interior design firm that specializes in taking your home from “blah” to “wow”. Even as a young girl Jennifer Kizzee had an eye for design. Although she went on to have a successful career in sales and marketing, Jennifer’s natural attraction to interior design never waned. She found an outlet for design by transforming living spaces for family and friends. In 2016 she realized interior design was her true calling and launched Jennifer Kizzee Design in partnership with her husband, Jon.

BOA: *What motivated you to go into the interior design field?*

Jennifer Kizzee Design: I have always had a passion for all the pretty things in the world. I always remember rearranging my room and hand painting my walls since I was 10 years old which drove my mother crazy sometimes! This whole thing was born from helping friends, neighbors, friends of a friend kind of deal. I just knew I was beyond driven and had an eye to put 2 items together and make them look awesome! It was until 2016 that I decided to make the jump from a career in Corporate Marketing/Sales (which was super scary) to being a Full time Interior Designer and I cannot express how happy I am for taking a leap of faith to launch Jennifer Kizzee Design.

BOA: *How has the field of interior design changed since you graduated?*

Jennifer Kizzee Design: I am the only woman within my own firm with no official degree in Interior Design. I am 100% self-made into this industry and I have always encouraged other women to follow their true passion early on in their careers. It took me years to finally realize that my heart was always on helping others making their dreams and visions come true!

BOA: *How can an experienced interior designer help a custom home builder or a remodeling contractor with their*



building or remodeling projects?

Jennifer Kizsee Design: In so many ways! People now-a-days have so much access to things and ideas such as Pinterest, Houzz, FB, IG and even though that is a great resource it also often confuses people and makes the decision-making process a lot more difficult. Having an experienced designer on your court ensures their clients will make collected & cohesive decisions throughout their house they will not regret.

BOA: What sets you apart from other designers?

Jennifer Kizsee Design: Our team is very diverse, fun & talented but most importantly, we are very chilled and

approachable. Some people might not know this, but a lot of our past clients are now good friends!

BOA: What has been your most challenging project and why?

Jennifer Kizsee Design: There are always challenges in every project, but I would say with no doubt that our biggest challenges right now come from shortage of raw materials, household items, furnishings, labor, etc. due to the pandemic and the results of extreme weather conditions. A project that could have taken 3 months, now would take

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double the time and that is frustrating to all parties, but we are managing it the best we can by educating our clients on what is happening in the industry & how to better prepare.

BOA: *How do you begin the materials selection process when working with builders' and remodelers' clients?*

Jennifer Kizzee Design: We always start with a pre-design meeting with the client where we have them share with us their Pinterest boards and/or photos of spaces that they like and dive deep into specific details. Once we get that part taken care of and we have a clear understanding of their likes and wishes, we jump to the design and schematics phase.

BOA: *What are some common mistakes made by builders and homeowners?*

Jennifer Kizzee Design:

Builders: Lack of detail in their finishes. Most of the spaces tend to not be very functional.

Homeowners: Jumping on home projects without fully understanding how much things cost. HGTV's renovation budgets are not real!

BOA: *Speaking about staying current, how do you keep yourself up to date with all the design trends happening in the industry today?*

Jennifer Kizzee Design: I follow a lot of great designers and architects on Instagram and other outlets. We also attend markets to keep up with the trends and we are constantly training our team to continue to enrich our knowledge about what is out there.

BOA: *What is your favorite design style?*

Jennifer Kizzee Design: Modern Coastal has always been

my thing since I grew up between rivers and beaches, but I am developing this love for modern style with an organic twist.

BOA: *What fascinates you and how have you incorporated that into your designs.*

Jennifer Kizzee Design: I was born and raised in South Mexico and have always loved the beach. If you look at our portfolio, you will see we have all 50 shades of blue there-I love the color of the ocean and lately some greens, so every chance we get we like to incorporate somehow in our designs to give spaces a more relaxed feel.

BOA: *How would you characterize your personal style?*

Jennifer Kizzee Design: Tough one! But here it is: Modern - Organic.

BOA: *What would be your recommendation for "what to do first" in a decorating project when working with the builders and/or homeowners?*

Jennifer Kizzee Design: I recommend starting with a wish list. This can include everything you want to achieve with your project, but I always recommend that my clients have top 3-5 things that they absolutely must have in their home. We use that info to help them figure out what their budget also needs to be.

*For more information contact
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Website: www.jenniferkizzee.com*



NAHB Identifies Top Features and Design Trends for 2021 in the Wake of COVID-19

After declining for four years, several key trends—including the average size of the home and the number of bedrooms and bathrooms—reversed course in 2020 as a result of shifting buyer preferences in the wake of COVID-19. The average size home remained flat at 2,486 square feet, while the percentage of homes with four or more bedrooms and three or more bathrooms rose to 46 percent and 33 percent, respectively rising closer to 2015 peaks.

“The primary reason is that COVID-19 has led a segment of home buyers to desire larger homes and to move out to the suburbs,” said Rose Quint, NAHB assistant vice president of survey research, at a press conference held during the NAHB International Builders’ Show virtual experience (IBSx).

An increased number of rooms within the same footprint means homeowners are becoming more creative in how they use the space within their homes and using features such as windows to help make these spaces feel larger.

“The space works harder rather than larger,” said Donald Ruthroff, AIA, principal at Dahlin Group Architecture Planning. “Open spaces are better defined, and spaces are flexible.”

New homes are gaining popularity as well, with 60 percent of buyers preferring new homes—the highest level since 2007. Quint attributes this increased interest in new homes to three key factors.

“One is the absolute lack of existing home inventory,” said Quint. “Two is buyers are concerned about touring other people’s homes. And finally, new homes are more likely to be located where buyers want to live.” She noted that outlying suburbs are the most popular geographic location, driven by increased interest among minority home buyers.

NAHB also examined preferences among buyers to help builders determine what features are most likely to



National Association of Home Builders

resonate in the market in 2021. The top features desired include:

- Laundry rooms
- Exterior lighting
- Ceiling fans
- ENERGY STAR windows and appliances
- Patios and front porches
- Kitchen double sink
- Walk-in pantries

Outdoor spaces such as patios and front porches allow homeowners to utilize more space, Ruthroff added, with the connection between indoors and outdoors continuing to become more seamless. Builders at every value level should consider how to integrate such connections into their homes, and incorporate detailing that helps to dress up these spaces.

NAHB also asked recent and prospective home buyers how COVID-19 may have impacted their housing preferences. Although the majority (67 percent) did not feel the pandemic had an impact, a quarter did feel their preferences had changed because of COVID-19, with households that have at least one teleworker and one virtual student being the most likely to feel an impact. Such households are also the most likely to desire a larger home.

Continued from page 9

with today's emphasis on smaller spaces, sustainability and minimalist design. ICERA delivers on style and with thoughtful details such as DuroPlast silent close seats and an antimicrobial MicroGlaze finish. Each toilet comes with a fully concealed mounting system for a seamless profile and can be easily installed at a standard or ADA height. Like all ICERA toilets, these units are highly water-efficient and are backed by a limited lifetime warranty.

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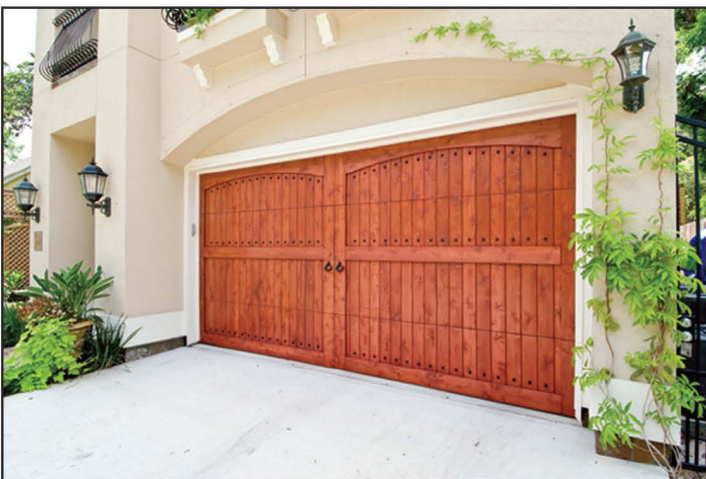
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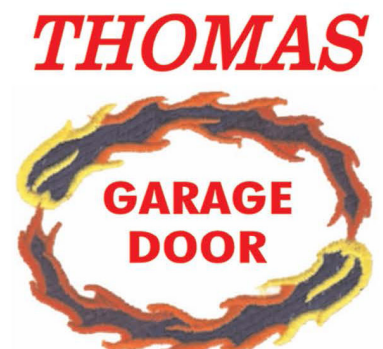
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